

Setting a path for growth

By Anne Tolley, Tauranga Commission Chair

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The Tauranga City Council Commission’s priorities for the first half of 2024 are straightforward – finalise a 2024-34 long-term plan (LTP) which will set-out a pathway to manage Tauranga’s ongoing growth; and to facilitate a successful return to elected governance.

Adopting the LTP will be one of the Commission's last significant actions on behalf of the city, so it's important that we get this right. Community consultation on the draft plan resulted in close to 2,200 submissions covering the range of topics set-out in the LTP consultation document.

All of those submissions will be considered during the forthcoming hearings and deliberations processes, but it's important to note that this is not a 'popularity contest'.

A key function of good governance is to make decisions which are in the best long-term interests of the community, even if they might not be supported by a majority of submitters, and to clearly explain why a decision has been made.

That last point is particularly relevant. One of the reasons the Commission was appointed by the Government related to the inability of successive elected councils to make good decisions on behalf of the whole community, and then to justify and stick to those decisions.

Fast-growing cities like ours need to invest in the infrastructure and community facilities needed to accommodate growth, maintain service quality and retain the lifestyle qualities residents expect.

That requires incisive and decisive governance – civic leadership which is able to make the right decisions and, if the logic and long-term benefits are clear, not be swayed by the 'noise' that sometimes accompanies those decisions.

In that regard, it's absolutely appropriate to acknowledge the maturity of the business sector and its leadership, which have largely supported successive moves over the past two years to bring the city's commercial rates more into line with those in other major centres, despite the significant cost that has involved for commercial ratepayers.

The fact that the sector recognised it needed to contribute more if the city's challenges were to be addressed is greatly appreciated.

The draft [2024-34 LTP](#) includes the proposed introduction of a new industrial rating category and we will be carefully weighing all of the submissions on that proposal before making a decision.

The references to civic leadership above are of course a key aspect of the city's election process, which is scheduled for 20 July this year.

It's hugely important for the future of Tauranga Moana that we have an elected [council](#) where the majority of members recognise that the decisions made to

address the city's growth challenges and inadequate community facilities should not be undone.

After more than a decade of wavering governance commitment, we are now heading in the right direction, but we need leadership which will stay the course and guide the city's long overdue development plans through to a successful conclusion.

As I noted in last month's column, if you believe you could be part of a strong and constructive governance team and you are committed to the future of Tauranga Moana, please consider putting yourself forward for election in July.