

Rates:

The Council proposes to create a Covid-19 Rates Relief Reserve:

To continue our Covid-19 response

To smooth rates increases over the first three years of this Long Term Plan LTP

To use surplus or unallocated funding from the Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve to fund this Reserve

To close this Reserve upon achieving a positive balance

Statistics to data show that the Region's economy, even with virtually no international tourists for the last 12 months, while under pressure in some sectors, has not collapsed. This is I'm sure partly due to the Council's proactive Covid-19 recovery interventions. No one benefits when what should be sound businesses fail in extraordinary times. The LTP acknowledges this approach.

The LTP's commitment to at least maintain current levels of service and to be growth focused are applauded.

There is a new playing field for water standards, one that's not likely to be significantly reversed downwards by future changes in Government. There can never be another death in this country caused from drinking substandard, municipally supplied "potable" water. We NZ should never have been operating at third world standards. Therefore I support investment in the continued upgrading of drinking water supplies within Marlborough.

In regards to environmental damage, New Zealand has been operating with a "deferred until later" mentality. Covid review and planned economic restart strategies gives everyone an opportunity do better at managing for growth and increased productivity alongside higher environmental standards.

Marlborough's citizens are in the fortunate position of owning valuable infrastructure; airport, port and forestry generated reserves.

The proposed rates increase, page 16 of LTP consultation document, of 5.73%, about \$160 per year, or \$3 per week for average Marlborough household equates to 1 [cheap] takeout cup of coffee a week. And while I acknowledge that for those on low and/or fixed incomes such as those on Superannuation, any increase will be difficult, as ratepayers we must ensure that the Region doesn't adopt a "deferred until later" mentality as a solution to avoiding any rates increase. One year's deferral due to the extraordinary effects of Covid pandemic, was the right response. Smoothing rates increases over the first three years of the 2021-2023 LTP is a pragmatic solution I support.

However I consider it important that the Council continues the option of allowing application for Rates Relief for low fixed income households and that these households are not overlooked in the creation of a Covid-19 Rates Relief Reserve.