



A Message from Chief Executive Garry Poole

Ko te pae tawhiti, whaia kia tata; ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tina – to seek out distant horizons and cherish those we attain.

Managing a city is a complex task. Doing so in uncertain economic times requires a clear direction and flexibility in the way we work towards that.

The Council's strategic aim is to sustain Wellington as a vibrant, internationally competitive, and affordable city. We work to achieve this in collaboration with others.

Our legislative function is about promoting the well-being of Wellington and its people now and into the future. This is reflected in all of the work we do. For example, we guide development and land use, protect biodiversity, provide basic resources such as water, dispose of waste, manage the transport network, and encourage healthy lifestyles by providing access to recreation facilities. We also work to create an environment that is lively, welcoming, safe and makes Wellington an easy place to do business and to prosper.

Many of our services are the result of sustained investment by the Council, on behalf of the community, over time. Others are the results of partnerships or the continued support of local communities and users.

This draft plan provides the public with the chance to state the value they place on these services and to comment on the role the Council should play in either delivering these or encouraging others to. This debate takes place in the context of wider challenges such as a growing population, increasing diversity, rising costs, economic uncertainty, public concerns about affordability, and environmental pressures associated with climate change and resource use.

Our approach to meeting these is outlined in the coming pages. In short, the approach will see the Council maintain most of our services at the current level, fine tune our own processes to ensure they meet changing customer needs, complete projects that we've started, and focus on areas that underpin our strategic direction.

The draft plan also sets out our financial projections for the next ten years. This includes the different sources for funding. Approximately 61 percent of the operating budget is paid for by rates. With the residential sector paying 53 percent of that and the commercial sector the remainder.

Our long-term projections are for continued, modest growth over the course of the decade. This equates to an indicative average rates funding increase of 3.4 percent each year. These are of course subject to change as we refine our budgets as part of our annual plans. For 2009/10, we're proposing an average real rates increase of 2.38 percent, after allowing for growth in the ratepayer base. This proposed increase is below the rate of inflation.

As the Mayor has noted, this reflects a Council decision to seek a balanced approach, which retains all that makes Wellington special, while also ensuring that rates remain affordable by national standards.

This proposed budget follows an in-depth internal review of Council budgets and spending priorities over the past year. That review was exhaustive, and I wish to sincerely thank Council staff for their ongoing professionalism and dedication to serving the city's ratepayers throughout this sometimes challenging process.

The early engagement exercise has also been an important input to the process. While a variety of views have been expressed, it's fair to say that residents are generally willing to invest in things that keep the city vibrant, and do not wish to see significant cuts in services even in the interests of a reduced rates burden.

This draft plan provides the chance for you to comment formally before it is finalised by councillors in June.

GARRY POOLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE