

Kia ora Hello

Your rates invoice tells you what you’re paying. But behind every rates notice is something worth talking about.

With significant discussion underway about the future of local government and how services may be delivered in the years ahead, it’s understandable many people are asking what these changes could mean for our region – and more specifically, this council.

The Government’s proposed direction of travel is towards fewer councils – it’s a reset of the entire local government system, which will see the removal of regional councillors from the 2028 local elections.

While regional councils won’t continue as separate organisations under a unitary authority model, this does not mean regional council services or functions disappear. Rather, the functions we currently deliver will continue within a new unitary authority structure.

The reform brings the opportunity to become a stronger, better connected region: one that plans and delivers services at the right scale, invests with confidence, protects what matters and keeps local voices alive.

While regional councils were excluded from submitting a proposal to Head Start, the voluntary fast-track pathway for local government reorganisation, our council was clear in its support for one authority to replace the Waikato region’s 10 district councils, one city council and regional council. That’s because a single unitary authority makes the Waikato region strategically stronger, best reflects the reality that some functions are more effectively delivered at scale, and is simpler for communities to engage with.

If the regional services our council delivers are duplicated through the establishment of more than one unitary authority, there’s potential for increased costs and inefficiencies, and reduced services. Detailed financial modelling is needed to fully understand the trade-offs, however, that doesn’t come until the next stage of the Head Start process.

As you read this, Cabinet decisions are still to be made on any Head Start proposals received.

While the future remains uncertain, our commitment is the same: serving our communities well to continue to build a healthy environment, vibrant communities and strong economy.

Our mahi (work) focuses on managing natural resources, environmental science and policy, compliance and monitoring, transport planning and road safety, flood protection, biodiversity protection and restoration, and reducing the impact of pests. You’ve probably come across the Waikato Regional Harbourmaster, Civil Defence Waikato, BUSIT and Te Huia. Your rates help fund these, too.

Thank you for your continued support as we work alongside our communities to build an even better Waikato.

Ngā mihi | Regards



Warren Maher
Chair, Waikato Regional Council



Keep up to date with Simplifying Local Government decisions:
waikatoregion.govt.nz/simplifying-local-government

Read our strategic direction:
waikatoregion.govt.nz/strategic-direction

Learn more about our work programme for 2026/27:
waikatoregion.govt.nz/annual-plan-202627

Connect with your local councillor:
waikatoregion.govt.nz/councillors

In 2026/27, we’ll spend

\$228.298m

delivering our services.

Flip over to see our key activity areas and what we’ll spend on each.

Sources of income:

General rates
\$68.611m

Targeted rates
\$89.031m

Government grants
\$30.780m

Other income
\$14.760m

Direct charges
\$8.732m

Consent holder charges
\$6.114m

Investment fund capital protection income
\$4.291m

Investment fund distribution income
\$3.578m

Interest income
\$1.620m

Our work is organised into eight groups of activities.

waikatoregion.govt.nz/your-rates-at-work



Regional transport connections

\$67.859 million

Transport is the backbone of regional connectivity and economic growth. A reliable and efficient transport system is essential, helping keep people connected to jobs, education, health services, friends, family and more. We deliver the functions of the Land Transport Management Act, oversee our regional transport network and plan its future. We also contract and provide public bus services across the region, and are responsible for the interregional passenger rail service Te Huia.

Mostly funded by: targeted rates, central government funding



Integrated catchment management

\$38.514 million

Catchments are areas of land that drain rainfall, surface water and ground water into a common water system, such as a river or stream. Through our landscape-scale work controlling pests and planting key areas, we help improve water quality, protect valuable soils and build healthier ecosystems.

Mostly funded by: general rates, targeted rates, UAGC rates



Science, policy and information

\$36.447 million

Science, data and the way we present this for people to consume are critical to our work and the work of many other organisations. We continually monitor and measure key environmental, social and economic indicators around the region. This informs the way we manage natural resources and create regional policy. We also share the information, empowering people to make informed decisions about what they do and where they live.

Mostly funded by: general rates



Flood protection and control works

\$35.369 million

Our flood schemes and river management activities protect 3000km² of land – 12 per cent of the region – from flooding, including property that supports agricultural and economic activity worth around \$2.2 billion a year. We also provide a land drainage service. Your rates assessment notice may name a catchment scheme, such as Waikato-Waipā, Waihou or Piako River, that supports your area.

Mostly funded by: targeted rates, general rates



Resource use

\$33.308 million

We enable use of our natural resources, ensure compliance, respond to environmental incidents and work with the primary sector to meet future challenges to provide for the region’s future productivity and prosperity.

Our Maritime Services team contributes to coastal and inland water safety by maintaining navigable waterways and promoting better boating practice. We also deliver education services, including Enviroschools and Kura Waiti ki Kura Waitā, to empower the next generation of environmental leaders.

Mostly funded by: general rates, targeted rates, consent fees and charges, UAGC rates



Customer, community and services

\$8.792 million

Our people work to ensure council procedures comply with relevant legislation and Waikato ratepayers can engage fully and fairly in our decision-making processes.

We put customers at the heart of everything we do, and we work to attract and retain great staff. We also oversee the distribution of discretionary funds to support community organisations whose mahi (work) aligns with ours.

Mainly funded by: UAGC rates, targeted rates



Regional hazards and emergency response

\$3.486 million

We’re responsible for having arrangements, standards and processes for emergency responses, in particular to floods and marine oil spills. Our work helps the region prepare for and avoid hazards – and minimise the damage when emergency events occur. We’re also working to better understand the projected impacts of climate change and help people make informed decisions about land use in hazard-prone areas.

Mainly funded by: general rates , UAGC rates, fees and charges

Waikato Civil Defence Emergency Management

\$3.675 million

To prepare for significant or complex emergencies, the Waikato Civil Defence Emergency Management Group supports and coordinates all local authorities in the Waikato region, along with the emergency services and other key partners, to ensure those organisations and our communities have the capacity and capability to respond to and recover from emergency events.

Mainly funded by: targeted rates

Numbers on this page do not exactly sum to the total spend overleaf as they exclude ‘Corporate and self-funding’ (\$847,000).