

## OUR APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainability is a word that is used often, yet means different things to different people. However, a commonly recognised view has emerged from the international sustainability debate that “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norwegian Prime Minister, 1987.)

Much of this debate has focused on human impacts on the environment, however the Local Government Act 2002 is clear in its direction that we need to consider and balance environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being and the needs of future generations in taking a sustainable development approach.

This section of our Long Term Plan seeks to clarify what we mean by the term sustainability and, rather than developing a precise definition, we have chosen to express our commitment to sustainability in a number of key principles that guide us in relation to the decisions we make at every level of our organisation.

### Sustainability and the four well-beings

In order to understand our commitment to sustainability it is important that we explain the relationship between environmental, social, cultural and economic well-beings (collectively known as the four well-beings) and what sustainability might look like for each.

These relationships are explained in the diagram where our environment sustains all life. A subset of environment is our society including the diversity of our cultures, beliefs, heritage and traditions. Within our society is our economy; a creation of our social system that contributes to human development.

Overall the diagram demonstrates that our people and ultimate prosperity are underpinned by the life supporting capacity of our environment.



The information on the following pages describes generally what sustainability for each of the four well-beings might look like and how Council’s activities make a contribution.

-  Environmental
-  Social
-  Cultural
-  Economic




## Environmental well-being

Human activity is closely linked to the health of our natural environment. A healthy environment is essential for overall well-being and prosperity. With our population growing, demands on our natural resources will increase. The challenge is to lessen our impacts on the environment, reduce consumption and waste.

Environmental well-being	Key council activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects on our environment</li> <li> Understanding how well our natural environment can adapt to change and absorb the impact of human activities</li> <li> Educating communities about environmental concerns and encouraging communities to change behaviour which is having a negative impact</li> <li> Supporting community aspirations to restore and protect the natural environment</li> <li> Enabling access to, enjoyment of and respect for the natural environment</li> <li> Protecting versatile soils, waterways, air, native flora and fauna for current and future generations</li> <li> Protecting amenity values</li> <li> Individuals, households and businesses learn to reduce, recycle, reuse and dispose of waste in an environmentally-friendly way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building and health services</li> <li>● Resource consents</li> <li>● Resource management</li> <li>● Solid waste</li> <li>● Water</li> <li>● Wastewater</li> <li>● Stormwater management</li> <li>● Community development</li> <li>● Compliance monitoring</li> <li>● Transportation</li> <li>● Recreation and leisure</li> <li>● Policy and planning</li> </ul>



## Social well-being

Sustainable, resilient communities need strong social and cultural infrastructure. A sustainable community is one that is inclusive, actively participating in political processes and agile enough to respond to challenges and changes in society.

Social well-being	Key council activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Equity in terms of access and ability to participate in what our District has to offer</li> <li> Equity within and between generations</li> <li> Interaction and mutual respect within and between generations</li> <li> A solid community identity leads to better collaboration to achieve the collective good and fosters tolerance and acceptance of others</li> <li> Infrastructure that supports basic needs, health and well-being, for example good quality water and wastewater systems, innovative solid waste approaches, safe roading, affordable housing</li> <li> Personal safety and freedom from fear within communities</li> <li> Our communities can easily become involved in and influence decisions that affect them</li> <li> Our communities are more literate and better educated</li> <li> Our communities are inclusive and supportive so that everyone feels they belong</li> <li> Community leaders make decisions on behalf of and in the best interests of present and future generations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transportation</li> <li>● Representation</li> <li>● Community facilities, (including housing for older people, community meeting places and cemeteries)</li> <li>● Community development</li> <li>● Libraries</li> <li>● Recreation and leisure</li> <li>● Policy and planning</li> <li>● Stormwater</li> <li>● Water supply</li> <li>● Wastewater</li> </ul>


## Cultural well-being

Our communities retain and can freely express their beliefs, values, customs and traditions. Diversity is celebrated.

Cultural well-being	Key council activities
 Better understanding of the cultural traditions and heritage of people living within our District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural development team</li> </ul>
 People are involved in arts, culture and heritage activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representation</li> </ul>
 There is a mutual respect for and celebration of the diversity of cultures within our District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community development</li> </ul>
 Māori are able to contribute to local government processes and offer tangata whenua perspectives to plans, policies and decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policy and planning</li> </ul>
 Cultural heritage sites are identified and protected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Resource management</li> </ul>
 Organisational capacity and capability to engage with tangata whenua is developed	
 Approaches taken to the development of communities recognise their social and ethnic diversity	
 Acknowledge the relationship of tangata whenua with the natural environment	

## Economic well-being

The strength of our economy is fundamental to the future of our District. Together with strong social and cultural infrastructure and sound environmental management practices, the economy is central to our District’s sustainability.

Economic well-being	Key council activities
 Residents have sufficient employment and access to affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community development</li> </ul>
 Rates are affordable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transportation</li> </ul>
 Our services offer the best value-for-money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building and health services</li> </ul>
 The local employment market provides opportunities for well paid, highly skilled jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Resource consents</li> </ul>
 The wealth of individuals is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Resource management</li> </ul>
 The local economy is diverse and has the depth and agility to respond to change and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policy and planning</li> </ul>
 Local businesses return benefits to local communities	
 Economic activity occurs at a rate or in a way that can be absorbed by our natural environment and harmful effects are avoided or mitigated	
 Town centres are vibrant and offer attractive investment opportunities	
 Our economic development aspirations complement, leverage off and link in with those of other districts and cities within the Bay of Plenty region	

## Our sustainable development approach

Although we can point to a number of good sustainability practices implemented to date, the process of reviewing our Long Term Plan has presented a timely opportunity for renewing and broadening our commitment to sustainability. For us sustainability is a journey and progress comes from the lessons learned along the way, the improvements implemented as a result and the way that Council and our communities respond and change over time.

Our sustainable development approach is reflected in a number of principles that guide us in everything we do. This approach is supported by our communities, which continue to call for moves towards policies, plans and decisions that will take our District, over time, towards sustainability. A number of our sustainable development principles align closely to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti O Waitangi) and reinforce the importance of developing and maintaining positive and purposeful relationships with tangata whenua. Please see overleaf for more information on the steps we are taking to foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to our decision-making processes.

Our sustainable development approach also reflects our commitment to the SmartGrowth Strategy which is the 50-year plan to manage growth in the sub-region. An integrated response to growth management is one of the most critical issues challenging our communities' progress towards sustainability. Maintaining and strengthening relationships with our strategy partners, tangata whenua, Tauranga City Council and the Bay of Plenty Regional Council are imperative to the success of SmartGrowth. A more comprehensive overview of SmartGrowth is included in our Planning for the Future Strategy (page 74).

## Principles for sustainable development

### Stewardship – *Principle of kaitiakitanga*

- ▶ Acknowledging a duty of care in relation to the environment. Understanding short, medium and long term financial and non-financial risks, finding solutions that spread risk and actions that produce multiple benefits

### Co-operation, consultation and participation – *Principle of 'He here kia mohio'*

- ▶ Listening to what others have to say, considering their views and then deciding what will be done for the greater good
- ▶ All sectors and groups within our local communities are included and given the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives

### Partnership – *Principle of Whakawhanaungatanga*

- ▶ Developing and maintaining positive and purposeful relationships with tangata whenua, residents, community groups, businesses and local and central government to achieve common goals

- ▶ Sharing knowledge and perspectives, working effectively with our communities and tangata whenua to create consensus for joint community action and better community outcomes

### Affordability, equity and fairness - *Principle of Oritetanga*

- ▶ Ensuring that the benefits and costs of decision options are assessed so that significant proposals are fair, affordable, sustainable and equitably funded
- ▶ Ensuring today's decisions leave a positive and enduring legacy by thinking in generations not years

### Precautionary approach

- ▶ Deal cautiously with risk and irreversible effects. The less we know about potential consequences the more cautious we will be

### Balance and connections

- ▶ Recognising the need for long term balance between the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-beings
- ▶ Decisions recognise connections that exist between communities and the natural environment

### Information and resources

- ▶ Monitor and make progress against sustainability indicators
- ▶ Ensure monitoring data is used in decision making
- ▶ People have easy access to information, systems and technologies that enable them to act sustainably

### Local solutions to local problems

- ▶ Working with our community, iwi, the business sector and other government departments to promote positive change and sustainability
- ▶ Sharing and learning from the experiences of others to progress toward local and therefore, global sustainability

### Capacity and resilience

- ▶ Economic activity occurs at a rate or in a way that can be absorbed by the natural environment and harmful effects are avoided or mitigated
- ▶ Build strong, resilient communities that can survive adversity by broadening economic strength within communities

## Polluter pays

- ▶ Where possible, recovering the cost of pollution from the polluter

## Anticipation

- ▶ Being proactive and responsive in addressing issues and seizing opportunities
- ▶ Bring tomorrow into today's decision-making by taking a long term view

## Developing Māori capacity to contribute to decision-making

The principle of *He here kia mohio* is an important part of our sustainable development approach. We recognise the importance and special place of tangata whenua within our communities and the additional responsibilities that the Local Government Act places on us to develop the capacity of Māori to take part in local government decision-making processes.

Equally, we acknowledge the journey that is required to develop positive and purposeful relationships with tangata whenua that can sustain us into the future.

We have developed a number of mechanisms for consultation and to involve tangata whenua in our decision-making processes. We will continue to review and improve them to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

**Te Komiti Māori** (the Māori Committee), which was formerly known as the Māori Forum, has been in place since 1990 and is made up of a representative from each of our District's nine iwi as well as seven Councillors. Te Komiti Māori fulfils an important advisory role offering tangata whenua perspectives on issues and making recommendations to Council and its committees.

## Our cultural development team

This team initiates, builds and maintains our relationships with tangata whenua and Māori and strengthens our organisation's ability to appropriately engage with Māori through exposure to and training in kawa (protocols), tikanga (customs) and te reo (the Māori language).

## Te Komiti Māori participation in our policy development workshops

Nominated Te Komiti Māori representatives participate in workshops to develop robust policies and plans ensuring that, where appropriate, tangata whenua perspectives are captured.

## Consultation guidelines

Our consultation guidelines specifically include principles for consultation with tangata whenua.

## Key sustainability challenges and opportunities

### ▶ Doing more with less

Since the global economic downturn began in 2008 our revenue from subdivisions and development (financial contributions) has decreased and many of our ratepayers are in a position of reduced spending power, particularly those relying on fixed incomes or investment income. In addition, the full effect of the kiwifruit vine disease Psa-V on industry incomes in our District is still unknown. It is clear that we are working in an environment of increased financial risk and accountability. We have a strong record of continuous improvement and innovation, so we are well placed to respond to increased public calls to demonstrate value for money in the services we provide.

### ▶ Increasing diversity

The population of the Western Bay is thought to be more diverse with respect to age, ethnicity and country of birth, compared to five years ago. The introduction of legislation in 2007 enabling more temporary or seasonal migrants to work in orchards around our District is likely to have been a major driver of the change in ethnicity. The Māori population, which is younger than our District's average, is expected to grow faster than other groups in our District. The 2013 census is expected to confirm these projections.

Considering diversity is important because different groups have different expectations of the services we provide and the way they are delivered. Addressing the diverse range of community expectations will be a challenge for the future.

### ▶ More transparency

As the economic impact of the global recession has continued to reduce household budgets, calls have been made for greater transparency in government, both locally and centrally. Our communities want to know that our services represent value for money and that we are managing our finances wisely.

There is an expectation that as households tighten their belts, so too will we. The public expects information to be made available so that we can be held accountable for service performance and decisions made.

### ▶ Integrated planning

The sustainability of our District and the wider western Bay of Plenty sub-region will depend on how well we plan with our SmartGrowth partners and other key agencies. Auckland's emerging spatial plan focuses on integrated planning and the government is interested in using this tool for improving the performance of Auckland's economy. Recognising the value of integrated planning that links long-term land use and infrastructure (including social infrastructure) with funding will be critical as our region competes with others, in particular Auckland, for limited central government funding to secure a robust economy for the future.

► **Population ageing**

In our District the number of people over retirement age is forecast to increase from 18% in 2011 to 23% by 2021. This is likely to mean a greater proportion of Western Bay residents will be on fixed incomes even if more over-65s continue to work. We will experience an increasing number of older people living longer than ever before. Population ageing presents a number of challenges and not just for local government. An integrated, multi-agency approach will be necessary to address these challenges.

► **Housing affordability**

The gap between house prices and personal incomes means that home ownership rates are declining. Housing affordability has an effect on the labour market and in turn on the local economy. While growth management has an obligation to ensure an adequate supply of land, there is a need to ensure sufficient rental housing and affordable home ownership opportunities. This requires a commitment and collaborative approach between central government, local authorities, developers and other key stakeholders.

► **Treaty of Waitangi claim settlements**

The settlement of Treaty of Waitangi claims in our region is expected to change the economic landscape in the next few years. We need to strengthen our relationships with iwi and hapu organisations and emerging leadership structures so that opportunities for collaboration and partnership are developed for the benefit of the whole community.

► **Diseases, disasters and extreme weather events**

The grounding of the MV Rena cargo ship on 5 October 2011 has highlighted how dependent we are on the environment for our lifestyle and prosperity.

At the same time adversity such as this often brings out the best in communities and reveals their true resilience and strength. This kind of community spirit, shown by the number of people who volunteered to clean up our beaches, is vital and will be tested further as the full social and economic implications of the spread of the kiwifruit vine disease Psa-V become known.

The effects of the Psa-V infection will be felt by packhouses, contractors, employees, commercial and industrial suppliers and the retail sector throughout our District.

We know that a long-term, integrated and multi-sector approach will be necessary so that our communities have access to the economic and social support they need to rebuild their lives and businesses.

Following the Canterbury earthquakes and Japanese earthquake and tsunami there is a heightened awareness of the potential consequences of land instability, regardless of whether it results from seismic activity, coastal erosion, geological conditions or rainfall intensity.

Some property owners expect us to respond with engineering works to reduce land instability risks, but in some cases this may not be the most sustainable approach. Where costs are high and outcomes uncertain other approaches must also be considered.

Our Long Term Plan details how we propose to respond to these challenges and make the best of opportunities along the way.