

Hauraki District Council – Minutes of the Plains Ward Public Meeting

Date: Thursday, 23 April 2026

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: Tūrua Hall, 476 Hauraki Road, Tūrua

Facilitator: Councillor Neil Grey

Present:

Mayor Toby Adams, Councillor Neil Grey, Councillor Cynthia Bates, Councillor Stephen Crooymans

Apologies:

Adrian de Laborde, Group Manager – Service Delivery

In Attendance:

Councillors Jo Tilsley and Rino Wilkinson

HDC Staff – Natasha Ryburn – Group Manager, Communications and Corporate Services,
Aroha Hughes – Communications Officer, Carol Black – Council Secretary

The meeting opened with a karakia delivered by Michael Barlow.

Opening and Introductions

Councillor Neil Gray opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing council members and staff, including Mayor Toby Adams and Natasha Ryburn, Group Manager of Communications and Corporate Services. He explained the purpose of hosting meetings in different communities across the Plains area and outlined the meeting format, including presentations followed by a question-and-answer session. Neil emphasised the importance of respectful interactions and noted that private, property-specific questions should be discussed with staff after the meeting.

Councillor Updates

Council Budget and Operational Challenges

Councillor Stephen Crooymans provided an overview of Council challenges, including the imbalance between income and expenditure, rising operational costs, and the importance of drainage maintenance across the Plains. He explained that most Council services, such as road maintenance, waste collection, and facilities, are funded through rates, with some services including wastewater funded by targeted rates. He highlighted the significant cost of the Paeroa wastewater treatment project, which is being depreciated over 20 years, and outlined how council continues to manage limited resources while meeting central government standards.

Hauraki Plains Adaptation Plan – Our Place, Our Future

Councillor Cynthia Bates provided an update on the Hauraki Plains Adaptation Plan, now renamed 'Our Place, Our Future'. The plan divides the Plains into 14 distinct segments, each requiring tailored solutions due to differing geographical and flood-related conditions. Community panel meetings have already occurred, with two upcoming public events scheduled for 10 May at the Ngātea Market and 17 May at the Turua Market. These events will share information on flooding patterns and adaptation options, and attendees are encouraged to provide feedback to inform final decisions.

Hauraki Plains Infrastructure Updates

Councillor Ray Broad provided updates on several infrastructure projects across the Hauraki Plains. The Hauraki Plains Service Centre and Library remains on track for August opening and within budget. The green waste recycling service has been discontinued due to high operating costs, costing approximately \$100,000 per year while generating only \$6,000–\$7,000 in revenue. Toilets currently located at the Ngātea Domain will be relocated to the Kerepehi Playground, where construction is underway, including a newly laid basketball court and playground equipment expected to be installed in May.

Land Drainage Systems Overview

Councillor Neil Gray outlined land drainage responsibilities in the Hauraki Plains, explaining that Waikato Regional Council manages flood protection while Hauraki District Council is responsible for local drainage networks. The drainage system is designed to manage a 10 percent annual exceedance probability rainfall event of 40 millimetres over 24 hours, with no ponding beyond three days. He also explained that certain activities within 15 metres of council drains require written approval. Changes to drainage governance were noted, with a new combined drainage committee being established for four regions.

Mayor's Update – Key Points

Local Government Reform Updates

Mayor Toby Adams highlighted major local government reforms, including the transition to Waikato Waters CCO, which will see seven councils collaborating to deliver water services more efficiently. HDC is transitioning on 1 July 2027. He outlined major wastewater investments, including the \$40 million Paeroa Wastewater Treatment Plant, and ongoing work addressing brown water issues caused by aging pipe networks. He also discussed Resource Management Act reforms, noting that while the current system is outdated and costly, new legislation will provide clearer national direction and more accessible consent processes, alongside changes to regional council governance.

The Mayor also discussed broader reform conversations, including potential amalgamation and concerns about losing local representation. He highlighted efficiencies achieved through shared services across Waikato councils and flexible use of council offices by staff. Rising costs were also discussed, particularly fuel, which increased by 38 percent despite a 40 percent reduction in fuel use. The importance of the rates rebate scheme for pensioners was also emphasised.

The Mayor explained Council's budget process for road projects, noting that 61 percent of funding comes from NZTA via fuel excise and registration revenue. Budget confirmation delays until August mean some projects are deferred.

Hauraki District Council (HDC) Staff Updates

Natasha Ryburn introduced a new rates payment platform, **Payble**, launching on 18 May, allowing residents to manage rates payments online (phone or computer) in addition to current methods of paying at council offices. Natasha also stressed the importance of using Antenno for service requests, as these are properly tracked and responded to compared with general complaints systems.

Updates were provided on road works, including completed patching and delays to pavement rehabilitation at the Hauraki Road and Orchard East Road intersection, which will remain under temporary speed restrictions until September or October. Council is holding the contractor accountable for patch costs, with new sealing planned for summer. Natasha noted that Antenno currently has only 1,500 registered users and encouraged greater community participation.

Tūrua Hall Committee Project Update

Dave Greenslades provided an update on the Turua Hall Committee project, outlining significant upgrade and maintenance needs estimated at up to \$2.5 million. Ownership of the hall has been secured with Council support, and the hall is regularly used, including for a monthly market. Approximately \$190,000 has been invested over three and a half years to reach the current concept stage, alongside drainage work and dieback mitigation efforts. Appreciation was expressed to partner organisations and individuals.

Tūrua Fire Brigade Status Update

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the Turua Fire Brigade, which currently has nine members but regularly assists neighbouring brigades. The Brigade plays an important role in emergency management and community response initiatives, including work led by Paul to establish a local community emergency management team.

Key Community Issues & Questions

Public transport challenges were raised, with the Mayor explaining that after prolonged dissatisfaction with regional bus services, Council explored funding a local van service but was asked by the Waikato Regional Council to wait for their proposed solution, which was later declined. Council now intends to reconsider community transport options through the Long-Term Plan to connect satellite towns such as Waihi, Paeroa, and Ngātea to essential services. Recent removals of speed reductions by central government were also noted, reflecting a policy shift away from road safety initiatives.

The Mayor explained limitations around Council control of state highways, which extend 10 metres either side of state highway infrastructure. Ongoing challenges include heavy vehicle impacts and deteriorating road conditions, with remedial works planned for next summer. He noted the requirement to use NZTA-approved contractors to retain the council's 61 percent Funding Assistance Rate and advised that Hauraki Road could potentially be reduced to a 30 km/h limit due to traffic pressures and insufficient state highway funding.

The new Library and community centre at Ngātea was discussed, with community members highlighting the importance of community input and cultural heritage. The initially preferred name, Hauraki Plains Community Centre and Library'. A letter was tabled by Phylis Hayward

proposing the inclusion of 'Hauraki Plains' in the name to reflect historical place naming and unify the community, noting that many local organisations already use this name.

Footpath maintenance funding was discussed, with the Mayor explaining that previous funding cuts required Council to allocate over \$1 million from rates to address maintenance and trip hazards. This equates to approximately \$80 per ratepayer and required balancing against other budget priorities. Traffic safety requests such as speed bumps were also discussed, alongside challenges in enforcement.

The Mayor and Councillor Gray discussed local flooding management, explaining that designated ponding areas, particularly in rural zones, help protect wider townships. Insurance difficulties were noted, with insurers increasingly conducting independent risk assessments influenced by global events.

The meeting concluded with an invitation for residents to raise further issues individually and a commitment from Council to follow up on outstanding matters.

The meeting closed with a karakia at 7.07pm.