



Wednesday 24 April

LTP Submission from the Kāpiti Coast Chamber of Commerce

What we're advocating for:

A sustainable business ecosystem on the Kāpiti Coast.

A resilient, efficient, and effective engagement approach that works in partnership with all key stakeholders within that ecosystem.

All entities are uplifted to reach their full potential as critical enablers.

We suggest allocating the economic development budget to the intended independent trust and having the Chamber (and other entities within the ecosystem) represented in that Trust.

Further consultation will be required to determine how this might look, but we're excited to participate in these conversations and work collectively toward a sustainable, equitable, innovative business ecosystem on the Kāpiti Coast.

These advocacy themes cross over with:

- A desire to ensure ratepayers' contributions are stretched as far as possible and allocated against measurable and meaningful outcomes
- The Council's intention to establish an independent trust
- Enhancing democracy and the engagement approach used to engage key stakeholders

The intentions that underpin our advocacy:

- To elevate the voice of the business community and show up wherever needed in support of their ideas and/or concerns
- To support our intentions to build impact through partnerships
- To awahi (support) the work already in motion and help build meaningful relationships between Kāpiti's business community and the Council
- To communicate our ideas, the resources and extended networks we have available to us, and the values that underpin our work

“In the rapidly changing business environment that we are in now, and the challenges that small businesses are facing, there is no better time to ensure we have a strong, independent Chamber to advocate on our behalf of Kāpiti Coast businesses”—Chris & Becs Barber, The Bond Store.

Who is the Chamber:

We provide an independent voice on behalf of the Kāpiti business community and local livelihoods.

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We stand at the intersection of community, public service, and private enterprise.

We advocate for equitable decision-making, activate social learning spaces, and help build the relationships that enable our district's development.

Our work supports positive social, environmental, cultural and economic outcomes.

We are for business, by business.

Why we exist:

- Advocacy & storytelling
- Learning & development
- Networking & engagement

*Membership with the Kāpiti Coast Chamber of Commerce has been important for me as a sole trader, keeping me connected with other business owners and providing me with a sense of belonging. The Chamber has also supported me while navigating and leading major local events, providing networks, advocacy, technical capabilities, and emotional support—at pace. We are incredibly grateful for their ongoing efforts.— **Helene Judge, Kāpiti Business Projects.***

Our whakapapa:

The Chamber of Commerce network supports 45 million businesses (and their people) worldwide. We are one part of a transformative organisation responsible for shaping global commerce and accelerating sustainability and social innovation.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, collectively, we are part of a 30-plus nationwide network that champions some of the 21st-century's most challenging societal gaps.

We collaborate with our Greater Wellington and Manawatū partners and extended connections across the motu, who provide our Kāpiti networks with additional capability, networks, and resources to advocate for—and uplift—a more equitable, democratic, human-centred engagement approach to economic development and prosperity.

We are part of a trusted international institution that champions transformation, policy innovation, dispute resolution, and leadership globally.

You can watch to learn more about our whakapapa and foundations here:

www.youtu.be/LyTrVlcECdE

Our mission:

Driving an independent voice for business on the Kāpiti Coast.

*“I don't know what I would've done without the Chamber when I found out I needed resource consent for my business. The costs and uncertainties nearly crippled me, but with the Chamber's encouragement and wise counsel, I managed to keep my head above water and get the paperwork over the line. I am now in my third year of business and thriving, but I always look back on those early days with gratitude for the Chamber because I very nearly failed before I really started”. **Anonymous, Emerging Business.***

Here is a recap of what we're advocating for:

- A sustainable business ecosystem on the Kāpiti Coast.
- A resilient, efficient, and effective engagement approach that works in partnership with all key stakeholders within that ecosystem.
- All entities are uplifted to reach their full potential as critical enablers.
- We suggest allocating the economic development budget to the intended independent trust and having the Chamber (and other entities within the ecosystem) represented in that Trust.

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While the Council's current ratepayer budget allocation for economic development in Kāpiti is substantial, it could be maximised further.

There are ongoing examples (and qualitative evidence that we're keen to unpack) of unnecessary expenditure— alongside an overreliance on volunteers to fill the unfunded, undersupported gaps in our society. While this likely isn't intentional, it deserves further exploration.

There's also a noticeable gap in impactful engagement, effective communication, or urgency toward addressing and elevating significant issues. These factors have led to persistent frustration, disappointment, and diminished confidence among the business community.

As part of our district's long-term sustainability and future, we ask Councillors to urgently focus on the critical action required to ensure ratepayer expenditure is maximised in support of economic and social well-being. We ask Councillors to place their emphasis on the immediate partnerships available to the Council, uplifting existing entities, and engaging the Kāpiti Coast Chamber of Commerce (and others within the ecosystem) as a primary stakeholder that represents the needs of our business community as an independent source of evidence, insight, and capability.

The current budget allocation for economic development requires a thorough examination to ensure it is being allocated, measured, and distributed equitably and effectively.

Together, we can pave the way for stronger economic growth by addressing unnecessary expenditures, building meaningful engagement, and working in partnership to provide the insights, resources, and inclusivity required to address some of our district's most pressing needs.

This shift to work under more independent and equitable values will encourage greater participation, contribution, and investment from our residents.

Empowering our community uplifts our collective sense of identity and belonging, building confidence and trust. It is about togetherness, future generations, and the distribution of power and wealth around a more innovative, equitable system here in Kāpiti.

*“Being a Chamber member feels like being part of a bigger family, which is very important to my mental health and well-being as a sole trader. Through their networking channels, I found great suppliers and customers and sought advice and support when needed. Being on the receiving end of this over the years has made me feel compelled to give back to the community in the same way—**Anonymous, Chamber Member.**”*

How the status quo is perceived:

All budget authority currently resides with the Council, which allocates spending based on limited (or under-communicated) external input or evidence.

The Economic Development Kotahitanga Board's oversight feels limited (at least externally), leaving the Council's operational divisions with near-complete ownership of expenditure outcomes. While the (now expired) Economic Development Strategy and Implementation Plan offered guidance, it granted significant freedom and discretion at a high level.

Current business advocacy heavily depends on volunteers, community groups, and the not-for-profit sector, and the Kāpiti Coast District Council's advocacy is held back by the need to preserve strategic or internal relationships.

*“Those who get involved with the Chamber are great people. They're community-minded, unafraid to speak up when needed, leverage their networks, and don't hesitate to roll up their sleeves. I've been around longer than most, and it's crazy to see these community organisations still needing to be run on the smell of an oily rag. I implore the Council to get behind these people, back them, and let the community have a more significant piece of the puzzle—**Anonymous, Chamber Member.**”*

Why (and how) is this not best serving our business community?

Ratepayer financing goes much further when Council, community, and private enterprise intersect. This includes committed volunteers, extensive community networks, and private sector investment working together when the Council uplifts and enables them. Our communities, Paekakariki, Raumati South, Raumati, Paraparaumu, Waikanae, Te Horo, and Ōtaki, deserve to have their hard-earned money stretched as far as possible and the opportunity to contribute impactfully.

The examples below highlight several areas where change or improvements are needed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. The Chamber has substantial qualitative data from across the district to support these examples.

We need to work in partnership to unpack these learnings and case studies in order to create more effective customer (community) outcomes. However, we cannot continue to expect volunteers and unfunded organisations to meet that need without uplifting their capacity and resources.

Optimising Expenditure

Organic involvement by committed volunteers can stretch resources further, tapping into their networks, connections, and volunteer time. Additionally, combining ratepayer funds with private sector investment, such as sponsorships and revenue streams, enhances the impact of economic development initiatives. Duplication in expenditure, such as duplicated events and engagement efforts and paid Council staff at events (when volunteers are there anyway), highlight areas for streamlining and cost-saving measures.

Reduce Reliance on Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers play a vital role in economic development initiatives, but a balance must be struck to avoid overreliance. Clustering volunteer efforts and providing adequate feedback loops can optimise processes and outcomes and will strengthen the sustainability of volunteers' commitments—both at an operational and governance tier.

Addressing Leakage

Leakage within the budget, particularly in staff/contractor expenditure, poses significant challenges around fiscal accountability. Streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary expenses are essential to ensure funds are allocated effectively.

Enhancing Meaningful Engagement

Meaningful engagement with stakeholders is essential for informed decision-making and effective project implementation. However, current constraints, including time limitations, conflicts of interest, and competing commitments, have a significant impact on participation. Addressing these barriers is crucial to enabling a thriving business environment.

In order to ensure effective advocacy, it is crucial to recognise that the Council's operational division may face constraints in advocating strongly for business needs due to the necessity of balancing internal and external relationships.

Embracing an independent voice for businesses alleviates this conflict, benefiting both the business community and the Council. Moreover, an independent review of projects offers clarity often unattainable within the Council's internal framework, enhancing outcomes for initiatives such as with the Kāpiti Lights closure/works period and the Waikanae Bridge closure and traffic management plans. The Chamber network has significant resources and relationships that we can draw on to support with effective stakeholder engagement outside the district.

Urgency in Problem Resolution

Timely and effective issue resolution to regulatory problems and effective communication on upcoming projects are imperative for addressing ongoing challenges. Failure to do so not only reduces stakeholder engagement but breeds frustration, disappointment, and diminished confidence amongst the business community.

Repercussions of Inaction

Business stakeholders feel undervalued and unsupported by some operational divisions of the Council, leading to diminished trust and repeated frustrations. Failure to address pressing concerns erodes confidence in the Council's ability to steward ratepayer funds and effectively address community needs.

Overall, the status quo does not best serve our business community. By proactively addressing these challenges, the Chamber can be uplifted, and the Council can demonstrate its commitment to supporting a thriving business environment and truly enabling the long-term sustainability of the community.

*“If I'd known how hard it would be to start up my business from home, I probably wouldn't have started. 12 months and thousands of dollars later, I'm still trying to get the Council permissions I need to trade legally, and there's no way I would be where I am without the Chamber's help. I am confident I will get over the finish line soon, and it will be all thanks to their support. Anytime I hear someone wanting to start up a business, I used to tell them how hard and how costly it would be. Now, I tell them to get help from the Chamber first. **Anonymous, Emerging Business.***

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*“I was up against a brick wall with getting consent for my business. On the encouragement of a friend, I reached out to the Chamber for help. I wish I had reached out to them earlier—it would've saved me a lot of stress and money. I am very grateful for their support through an extremely stressful time—trying to get my new business off the ground.” **Anonymous, Emerging Business.***

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*“When you're in the thick of your own business, it's hard to see the wood from the trees. It is nearly impossible to keep up with the decisions being made and how and when they might impact my business and my people. The biggest value that I see the Chamber provide is their ability to communicate key messages in a way that I understand (and I don't have to go looking for them)—and I meet great people along the way, too.” **Anonymous, Chamber Member.***

How we can get there—together:

The scope, structure and details can be delivered through the preparation of the new Economic Development Plan, which is currently being prepared as an extension/evolution of the questions posed in the recently consulted 'Direction of Travel' document.

The details of 'who delivers what' can be fleshed out as part of this process, but we need a commitment in principle from the Council under the LTP that this budget will be shared with the Chamber (and other key stakeholders) in a manner that will financially empower us to be a key enabler in the business ecosystem and a key delivery partner—alongside (and in support of) the ED team and the Council.

*"We greatly appreciate the Chamber's efforts to keep our industry up-to-date with local plan changes, RMA changes, and interpretation changes over the years. We appreciate that the Chamber is largely volunteer-run, and they should be better supported by the Council to deliver this learning to our community. Providing a service 'on the shop floor' can be a real challenge when the rules and interpretations are ever-changing. Having upfront, practical advice from a trusted expert has saved us a lot of time and stress and immensely helped us provide great services to our clients." **Architect, Anonymous, Chamber Member.***

The Chamber does not desire (or have the capacity) to deliver all aspects of economic development, but it is critical that the business community—from Paekakariki to Ōtaki—has a strong voice in preparing the next economic development plan.

The Chamber has the capability, relationships, channels, willingness, and drive to be that voice for local businesses, but it is inequitable for the Council to use ratepayers' money to fund a team of staff and contractors to prepare this document and expect this crucial voice for businesses to be provided for free (or, actually, business people are ratepayers, so they help pay for the staff and then have to pay again in their own time or to fund the Chamber).

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*As a member of the Kāpiti Women in Business group, which is part of the Kāpiti Chamber of Commerce, I strongly endorse the Chamber's submission. The Chamber has been the glue to ensure this group has the capacity and support to help women start a business in Kāpiti. The wider umbrella of the Chamber means that any woman who is experiencing challenges, from arranging consent to finding more customers, will always have someone experienced to connect with. It is essential that the Chamber has support from the Council and independent trust, so that it can carry on its great work within the Kapiti community. Far too often, ideas and projects are replicated. We can stand up better, together.”—**Small Business Owner, Chamber Member.***

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With warm regards,

Monique Leith, Chair, Kāpiti Coast Chamber of Commerce.

Appendix

Our identity:

Not-for-profit: our only goal is the development and success of others. We keep things lean, needs-based, and inclusive.

Curiously detailed: we dive into the intricacies of effective decision-making so our members—and extended community— don't have to. We fill in the gaps and help make the local narratives that impact business more accessible.

Co-creators: we share knowledge, context, capability, and resources to become one part of a much stronger whole.

Building capacity: we are deeply experienced in building relationships with local leadership, mana whenua, private enterprise, and emerging talent.

Our people:

Our organisation's activities are primarily delivered by volunteers, with some paid part-time capacity.

OUR BOARD

- **Monique Leith (Paraparaumu + Ōtaki), Chair**—Urban & Environmental Planning. Access & Inclusion. Becoming good Treaty partners.
- **Bede Laracy (Raumati), Deputy Chair**—Retail Hubs and Urban Centres
- **Lisa-Jean Foote (Paraparaumu), Treasurer**—Financial Services, Sustainability & Business Planning
- **Jess Deacon (Waikanae), Secretary**—The Arts
- **Ben Jamison (Ōtaki)**, Te Ao Māori Engagement, Growth Advisory, and Partnerships
- **Brooke Ahern (Waikanae)**, Technology, Innovation, & Future Jobs
- **Heather Knewstubb (Waikanae)**, Women in Business, Customer & Community Service

OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- **Claire Mance (Raumati South + Waikanae)**, General Manager—Strategy & Partnerships—Creative Services & Community-led Engagement

OUR SUPPORT TEAM

- **Amber Ferguson (Otaihanga)**, Event Manager
- **Kathleen Clement (Raumati)**, Administration & Membership Services

OUR ADVISORS

- **Heather Hutchings (Raumati)**, Past Chair, Governance & Leadership

OUR COUNCILLOR APPOINTEE

- **Nigel Wilson (Waikanae)**, KC News, Media & Community Advocacy

Our reach:

LOCALLY

- 22 years in operation
- 389 business memberships
- 2,900 database + reach (and growing)
- Seven national alliance partners (Air New Zealand, Z Energy, Westpac, 2Degrees, NZME, Bunnings, Noel Leeming)
- 13 local key partners
- Part of the Greater Wellington Chamber cluster with Hutt Valley Chamber, Wellington Chamber, Wairarapa Chamber, and Porirua Chamber

NATIONALLY

- 30+ national Chambers
- 22,000 business memberships
- An executive board that straddles central government, local government, and kawanatanga + private entities

INTERNATIONALLY

- A global network representing 45+ million businesses
- Our international + national partner networks help facilitate \$10 trillion in trade annually
- The largest business network in the world