

Submission to South Wairarapa District Council on Proposed Long-Term Plan

16th April 2025

Question One: Uniform Annual General Charge – Option 1

I have been a ratepayer since 1996 and lived in Martinborough fulltime since 2000. I have always been rated as rural. This meant low rates as they were based on land value until very recently. Subsequently, my rates have increased substantially as they should have in relation to other ratepayers. For 25 years I have paid a very low rate.

Now those with larger capital valuations are being asked to contribute at a more equitable rate.

Martinborough as a community is dependent on a range of people with diverse skills and services. Unaffordable rates drive people away. This has already happened in Martinborough to a large extent with the gentrification of the town.

The proposal to increase the uniform charge from 21% to 28% builds in a permanent increase in rates for those least able to afford it. Retirees on fixed incomes, Working people on average and below wage rates with very small annual increases to their remuneration. From personal experience I know that the remuneration for hospitality workers and vineyard workers is usually at the minimum wage and permanent or full-time jobs are nearly impossible to find.

This proposal gives a significant tax break to the wealthy and an increase to those least able to afford it. It is hard to understand why Council would choose Option 1 as their preferred option. It is somewhat Trumpian. One wonders if this a compensation to those with large capital valuations for now paying an appropriate proportion of the total rates.

Question Two: Targeted rate based on 10 Km boundary

The rationale for this is hard to justify. Country people use Considine Park for pony club and events. They also use the town Hall for events. Hospitality is centred in Martinborough and we know people travel to these facilities. The Medical Centre is in Martinborough. Many rural people also move into town as they retire and benefit from the services that are available.

The proposed differential is around \$11 this coming year, which is negligible, but sets up costs to maintain the differential rating system. Why not a bigger reduction for those who live 20 km or 50 km away from the centre.

Financially, the proposed differential is not significant at this time but may come to act as a pressure point on the Council in future years. What happens next year when NZTA no longer pays for the upgrade of the Palliser Road. Perhaps the roading charge for rural ratepayers should be increased by 250% to allow for the inevitable road maintenance that will be required. Or Ngawi ratepayers should pay for it alone?

This proposal introduces a mechanism for charging different groups separate rate charges throughout the district. Perhaps Featherston or Greytown with different infrastructure requirements should pay a differential rate from Martinborough?

Where has the pressure come from to come up with this option as the preferred option by Council?

I think this proposal is unwise.

Question 5: Water Services – Option 1

This is the preferred option by council. Does this option include allowance for future maintenance of water and waste water services? Will it avoid the situation the Council currently faces. A halt on further development in the Urban area and therefore limited new ratepayers. The current lack of maintenance of the waste water treatment plant is due to no cumulative provision towards maintenance or future upgrading over thirty years. South Wairarapa now faces waste water treatment plant upgrades in all three towns.

Option 1 would appear to lead to a recurrence of the same situation that Martinborough currently faces? I would welcome clarification regarding the relationship between option 1 – a slight increase to add inflation to current delivery of services and the funding proposal for capital investment in infrastructure on page 61 of the Long-Term Plan.

James Brodie

Martinborough.