

# Independent LTP meeting

A WAIROA ratepayer's group has called a public meeting to discuss the merits of the Wairoa District Council draft Long-Term Plan.

The meeting has been called by former councillors Denys Caves and Chris Joblin along with Larry Grooby and Gary Mayo.

In an emailed invitation Mr Joblin invited ratepayers to the meeting, along with the mayor, councillors, council executive staff and other interested persons.

The group called the meeting following last Tuesday's draft Long-Term Plan consultation meeting which they claimed was inadequate, with ratepayers walking out of the meeting in frustration at the conduct of the meeting — some even before the opportunity to ask questions.

The group said inviting council to the meeting is in order that ratepayers may have a better opportunity to ask questions in an open forum, and to show evidence that council really is willing to consult with and listen to ratepayers prior to the submission hearing process.

The group has also asked council to

extend the consultation period from June 16 until June 30.

They say it is inappropriate that council has not mailed out any consultation documentation prior to the third week of the documented one-month consultation period. For ratepayers not to receive this information until potentially three to four business days prior to the closing of

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## Concerns on many issues prompts ratepayer meeting.

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submissions, is simply unacceptable.

The agenda will include all aspects of the council draft Long-Term Plan including: a request to council to extend the close-off date for LTP submissions; Wairoa wifi — benefit or burden?; the proposed \$700,000 spend on new fire appliances; use of council reserves to smooth rates; affordability of proposed rates increases totalling more than 80 percent over 10 years; hill country farm

rates — increasing this coming year at seven times that of last year's increase?; the planned near-total depletion of ratepayers' cash and depreciation reserves by 2025; the appropriateness of council spending on non-core items, eg more main street development including new main street toilets, ongoing Whakamahia development, intern facilities, public spend on Gaiety Theatre; a Plan B if Council's current strategy is not successful in arresting population decline; and, written submissions to council.

Originally the ratepayer group meeting was advertised for tomorrow night but the date was changed to Thursday late yesterday afternoon.

At the time the meeting was scheduled, Mayor Craig Little and senior council staff had declined to attend because they already had an LTP consultation meeting at Waikaremoana.

The ratepayer meeting will now be held in the conference room at the Wairoa Community Centre at 7pm Thursday night.