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## Media Release

30 April 2020

### SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR KAIPARA BUSINESSES

Kaipara District Council is proposing an \$675,000 support package for Kaipara businesses and community groups who are struggling in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Council is now seeking feedback from the community before adopting the package after the proposal was unanimously supported by Elected Members at their meeting today.

Louise Miller, Chief Executive of Kaipara District Council says this has been a tough time for businesses and the people who normally work in them.

“We all want our businesses back up and running as soon as possible so we’re moving quickly to get the funding support in place,” says Ms Miller. “Businesses provide local employment and are essential to the economy. They also help to return the heart, vibrancy and confidence of the community.”

“Government departments and funding bodies are in a position to provide greater support and we are focussed on what we can do to remove barriers to help businesses getting back on their feet. This is a real way Council can show leadership and support economic recovery. Every bit helps.”

Already, businesses or individuals are contacting Council and entering into a payment plan and have their penalties remitted. The Council urges people who are worried about their ability to pay their rates to call them to discuss options with a member of the rates team. Another available, but less common, option is for people to defer their rates, particularly, if they are planning to sell their home in the near future.

Sue Davidson, General Manager of Sustainable Growth and Investment, says Kaipara has not been as hard hit by the pandemic as some other districts.

“Many businesses have continued to operate successfully through lockdown and the Council is relying on them to pay their rates to continue fund the services Council provides in the short term,” says Ms Davidson. “We’ve asked Infometrics to forecast the impact on the Kaipara economy and targeted our initiatives to those industries that have been hardest hit.”

To avoid delays, the Council has looked at what they could do within current policy and legislation. In some instances, they are proposing grants to subsidise fees and rates.

“We will have good assessment criteria in place so we can be confident the public money is wisely spent, but we’re going to keep it simple so the grants are easily accessible.”

The package includes support for the hospitality and tourism industry to offset their food, health and alcohol licences and to seek professional advice to support their business. Under the proposal, grants would also be available for commercial and industrial businesses to offset their rates over the next year.

Sporting and community groups could also benefit from a grant to offset their rates or leases over the coming year. Interest on loans could also be wiped for community groups. Campsites on Council land could receive support to offset their leases.

Funding for the initiative would come out the 2019/2020 budget and would not impact on rates for the 2020/2021 year.

“Falling interest rates mean we’ve paid less than anticipated in the middle of last year. We’ve also saved money on some of the infrastructure projects that have been deferred because of COVID-19.”

The Council is seeking feedback on the proposals to ensure they are targeting the right areas. Elected Members will review the community feedback at their May meeting and then decide what the final package will include. The fund support options will be promoted and applications accepted after the Council May meeting.

The Council is also working on a number of other initiatives to support Kaipara businesses and residents. Elected Members agreed to hold most fees and charges at the 2019/2020 rates, except where costs to Council have increased. This will further reduce barriers to business.

The Council is also seeking funding for ‘shovel ready projects’ from central Government. This would provide opportunities for local employment and associated businesses.

In addition, the Mayor’s Taskforce has been established to network, advocate, inform, support and work together with others in the District and beyond to lead Kaipara communities. You can find more information about it at [kaipara.govt.nz/taskforce](http://kaipara.govt.nz/taskforce)

At the same meeting the Council agreed the level of rates rise for the 2020/2021 year. Elected Members rescinded their earlier decision from February where they agreed a proposed rates increase of 5.49%.

A range of options was considered, with Council staff indicating a level of service that would be possible at each level. Discussions highlighted the need to reduce the burden to rate payers, balanced by the need to provide services and grow jobs back into the community through infrastructure projects that provide employment. Combined with the targeted support package Elected members approved a rates increase for 2020/2021 by an average of 3.97%.

The changes brought about due to the reduced rates increase were not significant or material, so the Council decided not to consult on them.

The Annual Plan is set to be adopted at the June Council meeting, taking effect from 1 July 2020.

ENDS