

**act** / local.



**A Manifesto for Real  
Change and Lower  
Rates.**

# Foreword.

Ratepayers have been repeatedly let down by their councils.

Councillors promise one thing to get elected only to then push wasteful spending projects, whack up rates, and neglect core services.

## **It's time to give councils a wake-up call.**

ACT is standing candidates in this year's council elections, because only ACT Local can be trusted to deliver real change and lower rates.

With an ACT Local councillor, you'll know what you're getting. They'll take the same approach as ACT does in Government, delivering the basics well, scrapping wasteful spending, ending the war on cars, and taking race out of local politics.

This manifesto sets out the core values and common-sense thinking that ACT Local candidates will bring to your community. It's necessarily broad – because every community is different. That's why each ACT Local candidate has also released their own localised 5-point plan to tackle the issues that matter most to you.

If you want to see common sense back around the council table, vote ACT Local.



**David Seymour**  
ACT Party Leader



# Cutting waste to keep rates low.

If elected, ACT Local councillors pledge to oppose any increase in average rates above the level of inflation. In some cases this will mean no rates rise at all, in others it could even be a rate cut.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Cut waste, council staffing bloat, and vanity projects to focus spending on those areas that really matter like roads, pipes, and rubbish.
- Review ownership of non-performing assets to ensure ratepayer value is maximised.
- Work with ACT in central government to end unfunded mandates and cut red tape that drives up council costs such as traffic management and resource management.
- Take advantage of new infrastructure funding and financing tools so that growth funds growth, rather than pushing the cost and debt onto existing ratepayers.
- Scrutinise all spending and procurement policies to ensure value for money, and partner with neighbouring councils where practical to save money on service delivery.
- Choose off-the-shelf technology and AI to improve council efficiency, instead of gold-plating bespoke IT projects.
- Support housing development where it makes sense and the infrastructure is there to support it.
- Stop councils wasting ratepayer funds on services that compete with the private sector – like outlawing cheap rubbish bags in favour of council bins.



# Delivering the basics well.

Ratepayers don't expect much from their council, but those things the council does, it should do well. ACT Local councillors will get councils back to basics.

## ACT Local will:

- Make the most of existing assets by investing in maintenance and upgrades instead of demanding shiny and new.
- Ensure weekly bin collection is maintained, while leaving room for private providers and efficiency savings.
- Oppose councils investing ratepayer funds in costly, virtue-signalling food waste and recycling schemes.
- End spending on vanity projects and nice-to-haves that detract from a council's core role.
- Simplify and streamline services like consents and dog registration to reduce costs and therefore fees.



# Ending the war on cars.

We depend on our cars to get to work, pick up our kids, and live our lives. ACT Local councillors will reject anti-car ideology and let local residents decide how they want to travel.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Allow people to get around how they like, without trying to socially engineer their choices.
- Ensure parking policy is driven by demand and local business needs – not ideology.
- Prioritise road maintenance and improve the performance of existing roads.
- Stop wasting money on things like speed bumps, cycleways, road narrowing and carpark removal that make it harder to get around.
- Make sure cost sharing for public transport is fair. Councils should be honest about the cost per rider and compare it to alternatives to ensure value for money.
- Ensure transport investments make sense in the local context. In rural and provincial councils, the focus should be on keeping existing routes reliable and well run, not creating expensive new services that are poor value for money.



# Scrapping race-based policies and backing democracy.

Local issues of rates and roads can be addressed without dividing the community by race. ACT Local candidates believe all New Zealanders are alike in dignity, and political rights should not depend on who your great-grandparents were.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Reflect core democratic values and treat all citizens equally, regardless of background.
- Oppose Māori wards that give voters different political rights depending on race.
- Oppose co-governance arrangements, such as joint-management agreements, that hand decision-making powers to unelected iwi.
- Oppose race-based services, funding, jobs, and consultation rights: council decisions based on need, merit, or value, not identity.
- End race-based procurement policies that award contracts based on who someone's ancestors were, rather than who can deliver the best service at the best price for ratepayers.
- Leave Local Government New Zealand which takes ratepayers' money to then lobby against the interests of ratepayers.
- Oppose unelected appointees making decisions on your behalf or spending your money on councils, committees, or subcommittees that spend ratepayer money or determine policy. That means:
  - No unelected iwi representatives with decision-making power.
  - No unelected youth councillors or under-16s sitting on council committees, as attempted by Hastings District Council.
  - No unelected appointees from iwi, business, environmental, or community groups with voting rights. These groups are welcome and encouraged to participate through submissions – just like everyone else. Unless they're democratically elected, they shouldn't decide how money is spent. Where external funders are directly contributing to a project, their input should come through contractual agreements, not by being granted unelected voting rights.

# Opposing council climate activism.

Emissions reduction is properly handled – and indeed, already is handled – at the central government level. ACT Local councillors will deliver core services and resilient infrastructure – not to try to change the weather.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Scrap local emissions reduction plans.
- Stop “climate emergency” declarations.
- End ratepayer-funded climate junkets.
- Axe emissions reduction slush funds.
- Remove emissions considerations from all consenting and land use decisions.
- Focus spending on value for money, not emissions.
- Prioritise continued improvement of infrastructure like stormwater and stopbanks to build resilience.



# Putting your community first.

Councillors are elected to serve the local community, not solve the world's problems. ACT Local candidates will focus on issues affecting ratepayers, and will stay out of foreign affairs and international relations.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Focus the council on addressing issues they can directly control in the local community such as fixing pipes, cutting waste, and making rates affordable.
- Oppose council motions and statements on international conflicts, foreign policy, or diplomatic matters – those are the job of central government, not local government.
- End costly sister-city arrangements unless there is clear tangible ratepayer benefit.
- Oppose virtue-signalling moves to boycott certain companies or politicise investments that cost ratepayers but don't make any difference.



# Guaranteeing free speech.

ACT Local councillors will take practical steps to uphold ratepayers' right to freedom of speech, the foundation of a free society. Councils exist to provide core services like infrastructure and rubbish collection, not to police speech.

## **ACT Local will Push for the council to adopt a formal Free Speech Policy, applicable to all council branches and venues that:**

- Affirms the right individuals have to freedom of expression under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.
- Sets out the framework and principles relevant to the exercise of freedom of expression in council decision-making.
- Guarantees that the council will not censor or suppress ideas simply because they are offensive or upsetting to some.
- Ensures all community groups, regardless of their political, religious, or cultural views, must be able to access and use council venues on equal terms. Councils may charge fair fees for use of venues, but those fees must apply equally to all groups.
- Explicitly states that limitations on freedom of expression will be interpreted narrowly and applied only in the most exceptional circumstances.
- Adopts institutional neutrality as a guiding principle – councils should not take official positions on contested political issues unrelated to their operational responsibilities.
- Ensures council resources are not used to support or oppose any position that residents are set to be polled on.
- Includes a clear process for resolving disputes.
- Requires publication of all decisions that limit expression, along with detailed justifications.
- Ensures official council social media channels are not used to stifle constituent comments or opinions unless they are inciting violence.



# Bringing life back to your community.

## ACT Local will:

- End the war on cars so you can drive to, and park at, sports games, festivals and other community events.
- Protect public access to Crown and council-owned land like coastal areas and reserves.
- Make it much easier for responsible bar owners to obtain, and keep, a liquor licence.
- End council-imposed restrictions on Easter trading so people can spend their long weekend how they choose.
- Keep rates differentials low so businesses can afford to stay open in town centres.
- Ensure any commercial or targeted rates go towards those areas paying them – such as ensuring there is adequate lighting in city centres so people feel safe to enjoy the nighttime economy.
- Make it easier for street performers, markets, and food trucks to operate in public spaces.
- Cut unnecessary red tape that prevents small community events.



# Unleashing growth, jobs, and incomes.

Councils don't create growth or jobs, they stand in the way. ACT Local will cut red tape and unleash businesses and individuals to build and thrive without excessive interference.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Cut red tape to make it easier to build, open a business, or use your property.
- Keep rates low so businesses have the confidence to invest and employ locally.
- End ratepayer-funded "economic development" that simply takes from some to give to winners chosen by the council. Instead, use the money to lower rates for all.
- Ensure ratepayers have more money in their wallet to spend how they wish.
- Ensure zoning and infrastructure allows sufficient housing supply to meet demand.
- Free people to use, build on, and enjoy their section without council interference.
- Advocate for central government to use new tools – for example, sharing GST collected on new builds and developments to fund the infrastructure they require – rather than relying on development contributions that unfairly burden existing ratepayers and developers.



# Restoring accountability and transparency.

Without proper public scrutiny, ratepayers don't know who is making decisions about how their hard-earned ratepayer dollars are spent.

## **ACT Local will:**

- Ensure council decisions are made much more openly and important decisions are not made behind closed doors.
- Recognise that councillors are elected and should be calling the shots, not faceless bureaucrats.
- Properly engage with the community on major decisions that spend ratepayer money, affect property rights, or impact your neighbourhood.
- End the rort that covers up how much the council is spending under the guise of commercial sensitivity, preserving it only where strictly necessary.
- Publish major decisions and consultations clearly on the council website and make clear how councillors voted.
- Stop excluding the public from council meetings unless it is legally required or absolutely necessary to protect the council's negotiating position.





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