

Message from Mayor and Chief Executive



We are looking forward to the year ahead. There are some exciting projects on the horizon. Some, such as the Putaruru Pool, the Putaruru Library/Service Centre and the River Trails involve the finalisation or continuation of existing projects. Others, such as the proposed Events Centre and laying of fibre optic cable in Tokoroa and Putaruru (Tirau is already serviced), are entirely new.

This year there will be a 4.95% rates revenue increase (last year nil %) to keep pace with inflation and move some of the key projects forward. This increase compares favourably with most other Council's across the Waikato and New Zealand and even better on a two year time frame.

The allocation of the South Waikato Development Fund will provide capital for some new and existing facilities. Council has confirmed funding for a Village Green in Tirau and for the Warm Homes Clean Air project. Council has also confirmed funding for the Waikato River Trails Trust and looks forward to more kilometres and facilities being added to the 33km already being enjoyed by residents and visitors. Funding for the YMCA and the Putaruru Timber Museum have not been confirmed. The organisations concerned are working through some business planning and other processes.

Feedback from the public was overwhelmingly in favour of establishing a District Events Centre in Tokoroa. Council confirms that up to \$2.8 million is to be set aside to assist in meeting the capital cost of establishing a District Events Centre on the Memorial sportsground in Tokoroa. The offer of funding is subject to a range of conditions laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed with the South Waikato Sports and Leisure Board, including the requirement to raise 90% of capital cost (including Council's contribution) before Council commits funds to the project. The \$2.8 million comprises \$2.3 million from the South Waikato Development Fund and the balance from other appropriate reserves.

The forestry to farm conversions are progressing, albeit in a revised form. Carter Holt Harvey Properties has scaled back their conversions, with the amount of land reducing from 25,000ha to 12,000ha. Within the former Kinleith Forest, CHHP expect to have converted 12,000ha over the next five years.

The Trade Training Centre is proving successful. Over 30 people have enrolled for either the Engineering or Carpentry course. Equipment and set up of the Centre is on track and will meet the needs of the Engineering sector across the District. Investigation into the level of interest in a Farming Course is underway.

Dairy Push started in late November 2007. Almost 60 farmers have signed up for the programme, indicating huge support. A focus farm has been selected for trialing new systems and products and a website will soon be developed.

The South Waikato Youth Council is into its second year. Five inaugural Youth Councillors have remained to take up a second term, with eight new Youth Councillors joining the team. They are working on some exciting ventures and we are thrilled with the contribution that they are making. There is also a strong link with Raukawa Young Leaders, which is also very active in the community.

We want to support Enviro Schools. The young folk in the community are an important part of our future and we believe they are innovative and need support to also see the value of the natural environment around them.

Council has previously indicated that it would undertake regular inorganic rubbish collections across the District. We still believe that such a collection has merit, however it does come at a cost. An inorganic collection covering just the northern half of the South Waikato District (rural and urban) will cost about \$180,000.

This is equivalent to slightly more than a 1% increase in rates. Because of this impact, Council has decided not to fund an inorganic collection this year. This decision does not affect the annual collection in Tirau.

Work on the Putaruru Office and Library will start during this financial year and we hope that residents enjoy the improvements of a more modern facility. We also hope that the renovations won't be too long or inconvenient and we thank the community for their support during this time.

Council faces growing and enhanced technology requirements and it is important that we do not fall behind on this. More and more people and communities are seeking electronic access to the information and services we provide and we want to keep pace with this. Our Putaruru Office has not been served well over the last few years and our ability to provide electronic information to you has been hampered because the "information pipe" is just not big enough. This is inconvenient to the smooth running of Council and frustrating for the public. So this year we are proposing to spend \$260,000 to put in a new connection to this office, which will provide a vast improvement on our capacity to make information available to you. Staff have been working towards this by making our paper based information, such as building files, digital over the last year. It is possible that this pipeline could also be used by other organizations within our communities.

Council has achieved accreditation as a Building Consent Authority. The building team is to be congratulated on their work to date.

Then of course, there are the core services that Council is responsible for. Besides routine road maintenance and seal widening planned for the year, Council also hopes to start work on the Arapuni deviation once land purchase issues are resolved. An extension to the Tirau Cemetery and re-alignment of Hetherington Road to improve safety at the Okoroire Road intersection is also waiting on land purchase.

Council will be improving water treatment to meet the new water quality standards and will be renewing existing assets by replacing pipelines in most urban areas as part of its routine maintenance programme. Council is continuing investigation into additional water storage for the Arapuni community.

Council is converting the final filtration system at the Tokoroa Waste Water Treatment Plant and some work is planned on the final effluent outfalls at the plants in Tokoroa and Putaruru.

The most significant capital project for waste management is the construction of the second stage refuse cell at the Tokoroa landfill. Work to seal and close the Putaruru Landfill has been completed and the transfer station is operating well.

We have been discussing financial contributions for some time. There is always a balance of encouraging development with the additional requirements such as roading, paths and water supply that goes with development. Many Councils have gone down the path of financial contributions where developers contribute towards these infrastructure costs. From 1 July 2008 Council will also be levying financial contributions, however we propose to discount ours by 60% - in order to encourage others to come here and invest in our District.

Improvements are necessary and Council is no different. Over the coming year, Council will be conducting surveys around the facilities and services it looks after. We hope the community will enjoy participating in these surveys as your feedback is very important to us.

Compiling an Annual Plan is a team effort and the staff and Elected Members have once again worked collaboratively on this document to capture a vision for the District. A big thank you to all those involved.



Neil A Sinclair MNZM JP BDS
MAYOR
26 June 2008



David Hall
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
26 June 2008