

IN touch



A bi-monthly newsletter from your local Council - Issue 9 - March/April 2013

Have your say!

The South Waikato District Council's Draft Annual Plan 2013-14 is currently open for consultation. It is important that the community have their say.

You will already have received the summary document earlier in the consultation period, but we thought we would remind you to make a submission!

Tell us what you think about what we are planning and Council will consider your views during the decision-making process. All submissions must be received by Monday 22 April, 4 pm.

Council is very aware the district is facing significant financial pressures and some tough decisions were needed to decrease the rate revenue increase from the 7.35% proposed in the Long Term Plan to a more acceptable 3.75%. This meant that Council had to make savings, adjustments and operational efficiencies of about \$740,000.

Full plans, additional summaries and submissions forms are available from Council offices, libraries, pools, sport and events centre and other outlets across the district; or from our website www.southwaikato.govt.nz, along with an on-line submission form.

There are several important issues currently facing Council and the community. Local Government Act amendments have resulted in two key changes: a shift in definition of the role of Council and to the process of amalgamation. In essence, these two changes mean that:

- Council's current role of supporting the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the community and development of the district is now no longer directly supported by legislation, and
- Amalgamation with other districts is likely in the foreseeable future, because the government has made it easier for anyone to start this process, and has made it more difficult for local communities to stop the process.

There is concern about what will happen to Council's current role in community and economic development if the South Waikato district

is amalgamated with other councils to form a super-council. Council has assessed what we do and how we do it, and in general we believe that our current community and economic development work is aligned with our South Waikato community expectations and Council policy.

There is also concern as to what will happen to the \$25 million Council holds on behalf of the community. Council is investigating a range of options to make sure the money remains for the benefit of current and future residents of the South Waikato district should amalgamation occur.

The options include keeping the funds in Council, moving the funds to an external organisation or spending the funding. All of the options come with advantages and disadvantages and are being investigated further by Council; but we are looking to the community for a general steer as to the way forward.

For more information:

0800 DRAFTS (0800 372 387)

www.southwaikato.govt.nz

www.facebook.com/SouthWaikatoDistrictCouncil

Clean Burning

Talk about poor air quality in our district has continued after a decision was made by Council earlier this month to put the Clean Air Bylaw on hold. This decision means it is up to the community to improve our poor air quality or Council may need to revisit the Bylaw. It's up to you!

BURN DRY WOOD ONLY

The problem is not just the age or quality of the woodburners we are using, but HOW we are using them.

Burning wet wood creates high levels of PM₁₀ and is very bad for our health.

Your wood for this winter should be stacked in a dry place, ready for use. If you haven't done this, do it now and only get dry wood that is ready to be burnt this winter.

Here are some tips:

- DRY wood should be chopped into suitable sized pieces and stored in a dry place for between six to 12 months prior to use.
- Storage areas should be properly covered, with air gaps to further dry the wood.
- Clean your flue regularly.

IN brief

- The proposed South Waikato District Plan is nearing completion; full copies of the 53 submissions can be viewed online. Hearings are yet to be scheduled.
- Council's Gambling Class 4 and Racing Board Venue policy will be reviewed this year through public consultation soon.
- There have been over 100,000 visits to the South Waikato districts libraries to date this year.

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IN house

Produced in-house for the South Waikato community by the South Waikato District Council.

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IN brief continued...

- Eight Heat Swap applications have been approved this February, bringing the total to 87 approved. The average loan is \$4,300 taken over 10 years with Council and paid back through a targetted rate.
- 696 Rate Rebate applications were received in the past year amounting to just over \$360,000.
- Five resource consent applications were received during February/March.
- 31 General Managers' Certificates (liquor licensing) are currently being processed.
- A total of 247 building consents have been issued for the first eight months of this financial year valued at \$9,951,637 compared with 192 consents valued at \$18,210,597 for the same period last year. This equates to a 22.3% rise in numbers and a 45.3% drop in values for the same period as last year.
- A total of 66 dogs were impounded across the district over the months of February/ March. 29 were claimed by owners, 22 have been euthanized and 15 are still being held at the Pound.
- 159 complaints were received and resolved by Animal Control Officers between February 1 and March 13.
- The South Waikato Rural Fire District is still experiencing dry hot weather. The fire danger is still extreme and the current fire ban remains.
- Waikato Mayors and the Waikato Regional Council chair have been working on various work streams designed to achieve multi-million dollar cost savings through greater collaboration between councils in the region. The work streams – covering planning and governance, economic development, water and wastewater, and roading – represent an integrated package designed to deliver solid results.

Introducing several new website features

Council's new website was developed in collaboration with a group of Councils in order to reduce the costs of the initial development, and to ensure that future costs for new modules and features can be shared. South Waikato, Taupo, Waipa, Hamilton, Rotorua and Marlborough Council's are working towards new common capabilities to allow improved online services for our communities.

To that end we are pleased to let the community know about two new features that are now up and running.

We have introduced a facility booking form which means the community can make bookings for parks, sportsgrounds, SW Sport and Events Centre, halls and other Council managed facilities in an easy to use on line booking system. Visit our website, click on the Book It button in the orange strap and go from there.

Paying your rates on line is now possible and can be found in the orange strap on our website, under the Pay It button. Currently this feature also means that you can pay parking fines on line too, but more payments, like consent fees and registration fees will be added in due course.

Another exciting new venture is the introduction of a Council facebook page. The corporate facebook page will be used to make posts about projects that Council is working on in the district, like road works, events coming up, leagues running at the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre, library promotions, consultation processes and so forth.

The corporate page will also carry notifications of all press statements, advertisements and announcements made on Council's webpage so that users can access Council news at the click of a button.

Our first post was to let the community know that the Draft Annual Plan 2013-14 is open for public consultation so go ahead and have your say. The post links to our website and there is an easy to use on line submission form too. You can read more about the Annual Plan and how to have your say on page 1.

Council also has a civil defence/



rural fire facebook page which carries messages specifically related to emergencies, hazards and civil defence situations like when Old Taupo road washed away last year.

Like us at facebook.com/SouthWaikatoDistrictCouncil to keep up to date with our news.

IN the know

The stormwater assets and systems are relatively long lasting as the pipes are constructed of reinforced concrete and have a lifespan of around 100 years. Other components of the system are channelling, grating, culverts, catchpits, sumps, swales and dams. This column features a snippet about Council.

Got a question, drop an email to kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz.

IN view

If you would like to receive this newsletter in electronic format please email kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz.

If you are a ratepayer, you will still receive a hard copy.

Talking safety with our Police



Police in the South Waikato have had a reasonably steady start to the first quarter of the year with (touch wood); our roads being pretty safe, and crime in general terms on the decrease in comparison to previous years. The decrease however does not lessen our passion to drive our crime down to a level where our community feels like the South Waikato is a safe place to live in and our roads are much safer to drive on.

Police focus these days is on prevention and engaging the community in helping us, which is why people would've seen the mobile community kiosk in recent weeks (aka the booze bus). This is just another way in which we approach dealing with crime these days, and in the short time the kiosk was out and about it certainly paid dividends as far as giving out crime prevention advice, reassuring the community we are doing something about crime trends, acting as a deterrent and actually being out and talking with people.

The safer community council are lobbying for CCTV in our CBD and on behalf on the local Police it is an initiative that we are fully supportive of, as it would help us make the CBD a safer place to be at night and the cameras would also have a major effect on preventing crime.

Finally, please spare a thought for the grieving family and also the hard working Detectives trying to solve the shooting in Atiamuri last week and if you have any information ring crime stoppers or Taupo Police.

What a waste of waste!

Last Friday Te Waotu School and Strathmore School participated in 'What a waste of waste!', the first two workshops run by South Waikato District Council in partnership with Waikato Regional Council to promote waste minimisation in the region.

The students learnt about what waste is, where it ends up, composting vs. landfill for organic waste, what natural resources are used in the production of consumable products, how items break down (if at all) and how to reduce, reuse, recycle and rot (compost) their waste at school and at home.

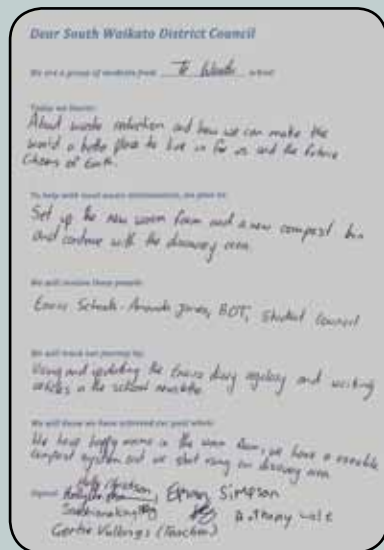
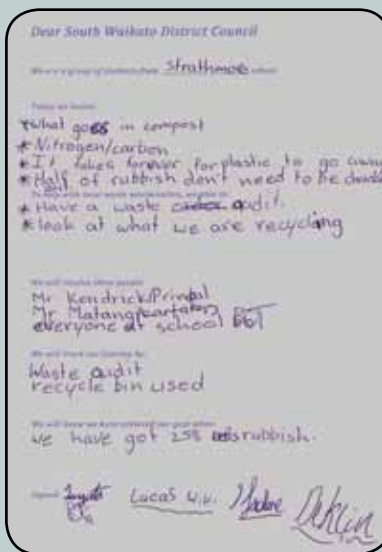
Here the students are with their pledges for waste minimisation at school which they will undertake with the help of a facilitator. Strathmore School has pledged to undertake a school-wide waste audit, improve their recycling systems and reduce their school waste to landfill by 25%.

Te Waotu School pledged to set up a worm farm and compost bin for their organic waste and to include learning about these in their planned discovery and science area.

The workshop on Friday was a huge success and the students and teachers left very inspired and ready to take some action!



Strathmore School Enviroschools student representatives with their waste minimisation pledge.



Te Waotu School Enviroschools student representatives with their pledge. Left to right: Ethan Simpson (12), Holly Christison (12), Anthony Cole (9) and Saedriana King (11).

What's on at The Plaza?

... by Plaza Manager, Nicola Warrington

The South Waikato Arts Centre, The Plaza Putaruru is available to hire for a variety of events! Suitable for small and large events, accommodating five to 500 for top performances, conferences, seminars, theatrical productions, exhibitions and many more.

The South Waikato Arts Trust is very pleased to announce that The Plaza welcomes new regular users the Sanctuary of Grace Church who utilise The Pavilion Room for their gatherings most Sunday mornings. More information about this organisation can be found at: www.sgcnz.com

Haggis Sandwich touring in May at The Plaza on Thursday 23 May 2013 – 7.30pm

Drawing on Scottish history and the Scottish diaspora to Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Steve McDonald's Celtic-flavoured music inspires floods of patriotic nostalgia.

Andrew London's wry, satirical songs have been the mainstay of popular trio Hot Club Sandwich for over 20 years, sending up our cultural obsessions and taboos with self-deprecating humour that makes it impossible to take offence. Tickets on sale now.

The Mods Return! 60's Band "The Mods" will be celebrating their 50th year in music with a one-off Concert at the Plaza on 25 May. Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of New Zealand's iconic groups with its original members from 1964 playing 60s music as it was played back then. Show starts at 7.30pm with Special guest Chris Gunn from Tauranga, performing Roy Orbison Classics plus others. The last performance of the Mods in Putaruru was back in the 60s so this is a nostalgic return for the boys. Tickets will be on sale early April; \$20 each.



Has your liscence expired?

In most cases, our drivers' licences are forgotten pieces of plastic. Consigned to the back of our wallets or the bottom of our handbags, they are rarely produced and hardly ever examined. Perhaps, therefore, it comes as no real surprise that 488,781 licences - in a country of just three million motorists - are currently registered as expired.

The offence for carrying an expired drivers' licence carries a fine of \$400, or up to \$1000 if a person is summonsed to court for persistent offending. There are the added penalties of being forbidden to drive by the police or, in extreme cases, having your car seized and impounded for 28 days. But perhaps the greatest risk is the likelihood that any insurance claim could be declined.

Have a quick look now and see when your license is due to expire... and if it's past due, renew it now!

The road(s) to everywhere...

Roading is Council's single largest activity of council. Council manages 426km of rural roads and 112km of urban roads. Expenditure levels from year to year are generally consistent. In any given year, the road network costs around six million to maintain and upgrade. Fortunately ratepayers only pay about half of this as our roading programme is subsidised by the government from kerb to kerb, including streetlights and street signs. So effectively it costs ratepayers about three million for the roading and an additional one million for activities not subsidised like carparks and footpaths.

Our road network helps people get around the district safely; and to move goods from place to place efficiently.

The roading activity is divided into several categories and Council often uses these terms in its reports and agendas; we thought we would explain them for the community:

- Rehabilitation: Around 5-6km of road is upgraded every year. This involves full width repair of the existing road, including stripping away

the top layer, strengthening underlying road layers by adding/removing material and adding a new seal to address larger deterioration issues.

- Resealing: Around 40km of resealing is carried out each year. This involves adding another seal on top of the existing layer, after repairs are undertaken in problem areas.
- General maintenance: This is repairs to small areas of road and potholes in order to retain safety standards and to ensure the small failures don't escalate to more extensive

and more costly repairs. The process is triggered by routine inspections, contract reporting and service requests/ complaints from the public.

- Seal extension: We extend around 600 metres of road every second year, basically this is preparing and laying a seal coat on a previously unsealed road. However this activity has been halted at the moment for two reasons; we have very little unsealed public road in the district (compared to other districts) and to curb rising rates.

- Seal widening: Council has halted seal widening for a few years to reduce costs. However this is when an existing road is made wider to cope with increased traffic demands. As far as practical, seal widening is done in conjunction with rehabilitation or resealing to minimise costs.



There are several other activities associated with the roading network:

- Road marking: Council re-marks the entire network on an annual basis and a second remark prior to winter on busy roads.
- Footpaths: Council maintains and upgrades urban footpaths. The current trigger for repairing a footpath is a

20mm displacement on the footpath. Council schedules annual maintenance based on its condition rating survey (conducted every five years) and complaints from the community.

- Drainage: This is the culverts that lie under the roads that prevent flooding. Most culverts last a long time. Again culverts are replaced in sync with other roading work.

- Other traffic services: Council installs and maintains a variety of regulatory and advisory road signs (3,400) and streetlights (2,250).
- Safety: Council funds a road safety education programme in collaboration with the New Zealand Transport Agency and other partners like Police, Waikato Regional Council, ACC and other councils.

So why are roads so expensive to build?

Building and maintaining roads happens in a number of stages, which are explained below along with an easy to understand diagram. The final layer of the road is 'sealing' and the cost of this is dependent on oil prices. Council bases costs on the New Zealand Transport Agency estimates of the annual fluctuations in oil prices.

How the road(s) to everywhere are built

Before a road is constructed, earthworks are often required to shape the existing ground. Earthworks could include cutting away banks and building up other areas; often material cut from one area is used to fill another area. Drainage is required to maintain natural water courses and prevent roads from flooding. Old pipes that require repair or replacing and installation of new pipes are done during the earthworks stage.

The first layer is called the sub base and the thickness of this layer varies depending on the type of road and usually ranges from 200 to 250mm (just less than a standard ruler length).

The second layer is called the base course and is thinner at either 70mm or 100mm, again depending on the type of road and traffic volumes.

The seal is the top layer on which we actually drive and provide a smooth ride and waterproofs the pavement. There are two main types of seal:

- Chip seal: this layer is only about 10mm or so thick and consists of a thin layer of bitumen onto which stones

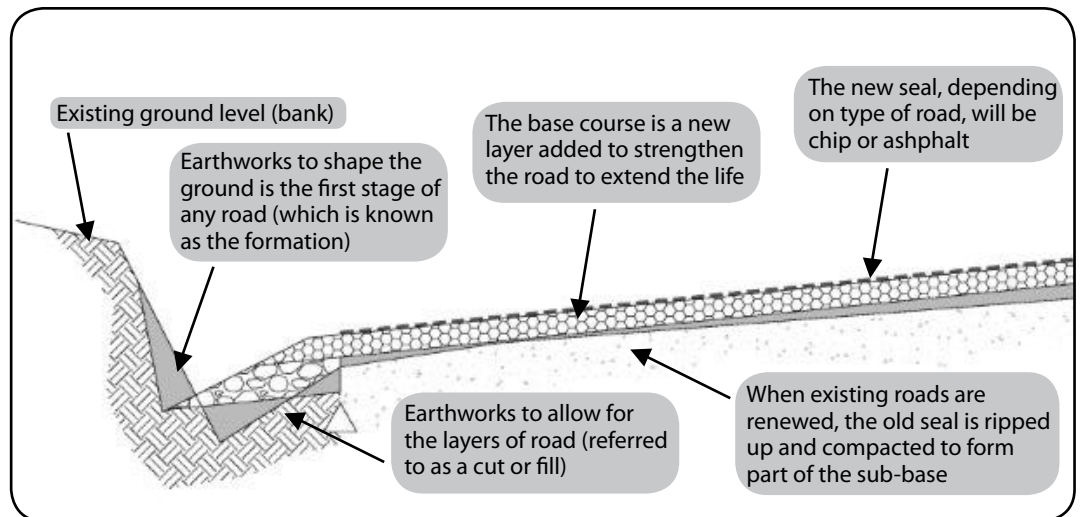
are spread, sticking to the bitumen and creating the road surface. Chip seal is cheaper than asphaltic concrete, but requires more maintenance, used for most district roads.

- Asphaltic concrete: This type of surface varies in thickness depending on road design and traffic volume and is generally a minimum of 35mm thick. Asphaltic concrete creates a smoother surface than chip seal and is quieter. We generally use it in the CBD areas to minimise traffic noise. It is more expensive and harder wearing than chip seal.

In simple terms, based on the Arapuni realignment project completed recently, which entailed earthworks and the construction of 500 metres of entirely new road:

Earthworks, including GAP65	\$372,000
Pavement and AP40	\$96,000
Seal	\$47,000
Drainage	\$38,000
Safety requirements, including guard rails and signage	\$47,000
Total	\$600,000*

* all figures rounded



Te Waihou and Blue Spring



Travel the world – and you could find a piece of South Waikato. Water from the Blue Spring on the Te Waihou walkway is served up in gentleman's clubs in Japan and supermarkets in America.

Customers there are paying for something we can swim in – if you can brave the cold.

The Blue Spring discharges water at a spine-tingling 11oC and is so clear that the trout laying in the current are easily seen. Which also means that fishermen are visible to the trout; trout may be plentiful and easy to see, but are not so easy to catch!

The clear waters and stunning beauty of the Te Waihou head prompted Putaruru High School students to research the feasibility of developing it as a tourist attraction. The result was such an outstanding yes that Council set up the Te Waihou Working Party, working collaboratively with Waikato Regional Council, Fish and Game, Forest and Bird, landowners and members of the community. And today it is a

major tourist attraction; indeed over summertime the parking lot is full to the brim.

Now there are tourists stopping and day trippers coming from Auckland to walk the 4.7km track along the banks of the beautiful Te Waihou, through native forest and over lush farmland.

Starting from the Whites Road end (4.5km from Putaruru), it takes between one hour 10 minutes and one hour 30 minutes to walk at an easy pace up to the spring (including a 500m loop track to the northern bank to take in the views).

You walk alongside rich dairy country, amongst native plantings, over boardwalks, through wetlands and up a gorge past waterfalls. It is a good walk for families, safe with fences and stairs and the grass verge at the Blue Spring is an ideal picnic area. And it allows easy access to the crystal clear water if you want to cool off or fill your water bottle.

“Peaceful”, “tranquil”, “stunningly

beautiful”, and “absolutely lovely to drink” are descriptions from those who have been there.

Or if you are limited for time – drive 3.6km up Leslie Road and take the short 10 minute walk through farmland direct to the Blue Spring.

Discharging water at 42 cubic metres a minute, the spring supplies the Putaruru town's reservoir in Pinedale Road and three water-bottling business: Coca-Cola (Pump brand); NZ Quality Waters (Cool Blue); and Aqua Splash (SOH20, Te Waihou Reserve, Waihou Springs and Kiwail). Between them they employ 66 to 80 people, supply 70% of NZ's bottled water and export water around the world.

NZ Quality Waters sales manager Wayne Mason said the Blue Spring's water is one of the best in the world. “Most bottled water requires a lot of processing, but Blue Spring water is so pure it is only filtered and sterilised before bottling. What you are drinking is what comes straight out of the spring – which is very unique.”

- Simply Magnificent



It is not only the lack of 'nasty' pollutants, but also the high silica content that is popular with Asian markets. Obtained during the 50 to 100 years the water filters through the Mamakau Plateau, silica is considered to have healing qualities and be very good for the skin and general health and wellbeing.

That these businesses can physically take customers along the Te Waihou walkway and view the source of their water is a major benefit. Mr Mason said being able to show the source is something very few water suppliers can do. And the crystal-clear, beautiful spring has captured the hearts of water buyers, advertisement makers, film locators, photographers and tourists from around the world – check out the flyover footage on youtube - just search for Te Waihou.

The clear waters are home to waving aquatic plants, numerous and easily spotted rainbow trout, large koura (freshwater crayfish), and not-so-easily-seen New Zealand fresh water fish – dwarf galaxias and bottom-dwelling crans bullies.

These are all locked into the headwaters of the Te Waihou stream by the Okoroire Falls which prevent any ocean migration. Fish and Game drift-dive the stream to observe the aquatic life and Waikato Regional Council recently spent time trying to establish ways in which to catch the dwarf galaxias so they could research them. This tributary is by far the northern-most known habitat of the dwarf galaxias and little is known about their life-cycle.

But Stu Emeades, chairman of the Te Waihou Working Party, said the magic part of

the Te Waihou is the Year 13 Putaruru High School Students who developed it, the school children who have planted 7,500 native trees alongside the river and the community who have supported it.

"It is a fantastic example of farmer and community coming together to protect the river", said Mr Edmeads. "This is our piece of paradise."

Since Prime Minister Rt Hon Helen Clarke opened Te Waihou Walkway in 2000, an estimated 200,000 people have walked up to view the world-famous Blue Springs.

Have you?

Have you walked Te Waihou?

Councillor Column

Jenny Shattock

We have spent many hours working on the Draft Annual Plan 2013-14, trying to get the most for every rate dollar that we spend and it's now out for public consultation. I'm a ratepayer too and I can assure you that value for money is uppermost in my mind when we discuss rates. Please read the plan, make submissions and have your say.

There have been concerns about the new service station and liquor outlet soon to be built in Tokoroa. Currently Council cannot stop this development as it is compliant with our District Plan. We didn't have the choice to say no to it. I don't want another liquor outlet that's for sure and that's why we are working with the Mayor to have our new local liquor policy fast tracked so that we can deal with this.

I also want to assure people that despite what you read in the local paper or on facebook, elected members around the council table work very hard to represent you to the best of our abilities. We do have healthy debate, and we don't always agree, however we all accept the rule of democracy.

Things that we have achieved are often hard to get out to people and projects that we have completed and that I have been involved with vary from the Youth Park, Lake Moana Nui pathway, new swimming pool in Putaruru, upgrade of the Plaza, new toilets and changing rooms at the Memorial Sportsground, River Trails construction and a constant drive for new businesses, neighbourhood parties, plenty of new toilets in the district, banners on state highway one and of course the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre to name a few.

There is a lot of good stuff happening in our district and we need to remind ourselves sometimes of how good the South Waikato is as a place to live and work.

Councillor Column

Herman van Rooijen

It's been a challenging summer for many in the rural sector, farmstaff, contract milkers, sharemilkers and farmowners have all been affected by unprecedented hot and dry weather over a long period. And I know many people right through our district are feeling the effects.

It's very encouraging to me that so many farmers are finding innovative ways of dealing with whatever comes their way and come out strong. Surely it's going to rain again on all of us

Recently I attended the opening of the Atiamuri bridge. Part of this work will mean much better parking for the southern start of the River Trail, a project that is going from strength to strength.

And a few weeks ago, I was at the launch of the Taratahi Agricultural Training School at Buttermilk in Putaruru.

Forestry and farming drive our economy and we need good young well trained people just as we are achieving through our Trade Training Centre in Tokoroa. At Council recently we heard from Professor Nataly Jackson, Waikato University, on population trends and ours has been a downward one over recent years.

We were made very aware how precious young people are going to be and how much competition there will be for them. It may be a bit hard to see right now in hard times, but part of our (councillors) responsibilities is to look ahead. Hence my excitement over another opportunity to provide targeted training, with involvement of local residents to give guidance as to what our local needs are.

A large piece of work of particular interest to me is the District Plan, started over three years ago and coming to the final hearings stage.

And finally, our judgement is that some form of amalgamation of local government is a distinct possibility, so we have begun to work to secure our investment fund for our local community, it's ours (South Waikato's) and we are not for sharing.

Councillor Column

Brenda Watkins

From a councillor's point of view this has been a hard year. The work load has been heavy and the decisions difficult.

A major news item has been the dangerous dog and resulting court action. As a past dog owner I hate hearing of dogs being destroyed. The large number of dogs euthanised here is heart wrenching, but so are stories of children or adults maimed and hurt by out of control dogs. Our Council must abide by the law. When four judges say a dog is dangerous we must follow their instructions. The financial cost however has left us as shattered as you the rate payers must be.

The Long Term Plan and the Annual Plan meant reading volumes of information, followed by many days of workshops before passing these drafts. The Annual Plan is currently open for consultation and I encourage you to have your say.

Submissions such as those on the draft Clean Air Bylaw help us make decisions. In this case we decided on alternative measures to improve air quality; although by not passing the Bylaw we will lose Regional Council funding. I think we were all relieved to make this decision.

Our walkway closure decision was over turned by the Environment Court as part of the routine process. Does this leave us less able to close walkways in the future? Possibly.

A new law soon to be put in place by central Government will finally give us the power to prevent more Liquor Outlets opening. Too little too late you may say.

The good news is, we're making plans to protect our investments through our Annual Plan proposal and our hospital is being enlarged to accommodate a state of the art surgery for our doctors and community.

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TOKOROA

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