



# IN touch



A bi-monthly newsletter from your local Council - Issue 15 - March/April 2014

## Have your say... consultation open

**Council's draft Annual Plan 2014-15 is currently open for public consultation. Have your say on Council's proposed budget and plans for the coming year by making a submission before 4pm on Monday 28 April.**

The draft Annual Plan is where you can find out what it costs to run the district, how the rates you pay will be spent and what we are planning to do to make the South Waikato a better place to live, now and in the future.

Most importantly it is your opportunity to have your say by telling us what you think of our plans, what we've missed, what we can perhaps postpone or cancel (either to save on rates or so that we can include other preferred projects without increasing rates).

You can get a copy of the full plan, summary documents and submission forms:

- Visit [www.southwaikato.govt.nz](http://www.southwaikato.govt.nz)
- Contact the Council office in Tokoroa (07 885 0340), Putāruru (07 883 7189) or the Tirau Information Centre (07 883 1202) or your local library and a hard copy will be posted to you.
- Call 0800 DRAFTS (0800 372 387) and we can mail you a hard copy and answer any questions you might have.

Submissions can be made online through our website

or by completing a form and either posting it to Council or dropping it off at the offices, libraries, pools or events centre.

We are very aware that Council delivers plenty of other services, some discretionary and some by statute (ie, that we have to do under the law). And we have to balance all of this - working towards our two key objectives and delivering our wide and varied range of services with what our community can afford. Our community is faced with significant financial pressures and some tough decisions are needed to ensure that we focus on the important things.

### But wait there's more...

Council is specifically looking for feedback on one key point. Some may recall that following public consultation over the past couple of years, we decided to move the bulk of our investment fund (\$26million) outside of Council into an external trust. This is being done in order to safeguard the funding for our current community in the event of amalgamation.

Council has decided however to retain a portion of this investment fund (\$5 million) in-house to put towards some significant economic and community development projects that Council and the community have identified over the past years that would be of value but that are outside of what Council would normally fund through rates.

This funding is not for supporting the operations of community groups - the money is planned to be spent on significant new projects.

Council has suggested projects for consideration, but we are very interested in hearing from you about your projects and ideas. There is more detail on this in the draft Annual Plan.

Proposals must be in a prescribed electronic format so that all details that Council needs to make decisions are addressed. This is online only on Council's website: [www.southwaikato.govt.nz](http://www.southwaikato.govt.nz).

You can call 0800 DRAFTS for technical assistance with completing this online application form.

## Hot Tips!

When you use your wood burner you can reduce the amount of pollution given off by:

- Using enough kindling to get a hot fire going as quickly as possible
- Scrunching up two or three sheets of newspaper to place on top of the kindling. They will burn quickly, heat the flue and get a draught going to oxygenate the fire.
- Burning dry wood only (not green). The wood you will be burning this winter **should** have been stored in a dry area for 6-12 months.
- Not burning treated, painted, green or wet wood; plywood or particle board; or recyclables like plastic and cardboard.



- Tokoroa Firewood Ltd**  
0508 FOR WOOD (367 9663)
- Balmoral Firewood Supplies**  
07 886 7550
- Tokoroa City Lions**  
[www.tokoroalions.com](http://www.tokoroalions.com)
- Central Bay Firewood**  
07 886 6387
- SW Achievement Centre**  
07 886 8941

### IN brief

- District property sales totalled 411 for the period 1 July 2013 to 28 February 2014, which is on par with the same period the year prior with 416 sales.
- Council staff and our noise control contractor attended 73 callouts in February, and there was one seizure.
- Thirty building consents were processed during the month of February, compared to 43 during February last year. However the value was \$1,519,416 (2014) compared to \$1,442,299.9 (2013).

### IN side

- 2&3 Council services and the cost per week
- 4&5 Council services/costs Cannabinoids
- 6&7 Good dog ownership RAL appeal dismissed
- 8 Councillor columns Councillor contacts

### IN house

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

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# Understanding Council activities... and what it costs each week

Every year South Waikato ratepayers make an annual rates contribution to Council. This rates contribution pays for a wide range of activities from core services such as waste management and roads to regulatory areas such as animal control and building consents, and services that encourage the health, educational and social wellbeing of our community such as libraries, pools and reserves, among many others.

The following article is to help you understand what activities Council does on your behalf and show you how much of your rates go towards funding each of these activities.

We have chosen to tell this story by breaking each service or activity down into a cost per week. And we have chosen an urban property in Tokoroa valued at \$116,000 to base these figures on\*.

*\*This value house is the median house value in the South Waikato. These figures fluctuate depending on property value; it is impossible to illustrate this for every single ratepayer. These figures also reflect the proposed rates for the 2014-15 year (see front page draft Annual Plan).*

We have also decided to list our activities from lowest funded

activity first to highest funded activity; and we have colour coded them to illustrate which activities or services fit together in logical groups.

Assets - orange

Corporate - blue

Regulatory - green

Community - yellow

**Note: this article is not a totally complete picture as there are some other really small services/costs, many targeted like community halls and business promotion rates; but the amounts involved are tiny; less than 4 cents a week (cemeteries) - which is just \$2.08 a year!**

## 1 Cemeteries

There are four cemeteries in the South Waikato, one in Tirau, two in Putāruru and one in Tokoroa. Local authorities have a legal responsibility to make provision for public cemeteries. We perform around 76 burials per year and about half that number of ash interments. Council maintains all cemetery grounds and keeps records of all plots. These are searchable online via Council's website.



Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 60% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 40% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.04** towards this activity.

## 2 Animal control

Our Animal Control officers are responsible for complaints regarding dogs and stock. Council also handles dog registrations and manages the dog pound. There are 3,667 dogs in the district registered to 2,572 dog owners. Council responds to around 2,500 animal control related queries each year.



Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 60% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 40% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.20** towards this activity.

## 3 Other community facilities

Council owns and manages a number of community facilities including The Plaza, community halls, depots, Council buildings, airfield among others.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy:

- 5% of community halls are funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 95% is funded by targeted rates (only those in the hall rating area).
- 10% of property management is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 90% by rates.
- 100% of the Plaza and Tirau Hall is funded by rates.
- 60% of the airport is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 40% by rates.



Every week you contribute **\$0.21** towards this activity.

## 4 Emergency management

In emergencies that are beyond the capabilities of the emergency services like Police and Ambulance, Council helps to access more resources and co-ordinate support to assist in protecting people and property. This activity also involves issuing rural fire permits and arrangements for rural fire-fighting cover.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.29** towards this activity.



## 5 SW Sport and Events Centre

Council's premier sport and events centre is into its second year of operation. Situated at the Tokoroa Memorial sports ground, this facility overlooks the oval with the wider sportsground forming a backdrop. The facility has a two court arena and two function rooms (that can operate as one large one), and changing facilities for up to four teams. It has proven a popular venue for events and activities in its first year of operation and usage is increasing steadily.



Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 20% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 80% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.29** towards this activity.

## 6 Health services and monitoring

The Environmental Health section of Council covers an unusually vast array of activities.

Whenever you go out for a slice of cake, pick up a bottle of wine at the liquor store, or have your hair cut at a local hairdresser - or other businesses like hotels, motels, camping grounds, funeral directors, our Environmental Health Team has already made sure the shop you are visiting maintains good standards of hygiene and follows government regulations, giving you confidence in the facilities and providing for community safety and wellbeing. Over 200 health licences are issued each year.

The team also:

- respond to over 900 nuisance complaints a year, including noise, vermin, long grass and insanitary conditions
- investigate infectious diseases to stop the spread of the disease
- provide safeguards to the community following incidents involving hazardous substances, like chemical spills from a vehicle accident.
- among an number of other duties!



Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 20% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 80% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.30** towards this activity.

## 9 Public toilets

Council owns and maintains 36 public toilet blocks across the district: seven in our CBD areas, 13 in reserves and 16 in Council buildings.

Public toilets are an important part of our tourism opportunity particularly along the Waikato River Trails and Te Waihou Walkway.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.39** towards this activity.



## 10 Sportsgrounds

Whether you're playing rugby with your mates or watching our kids play soccer, the South Waikato's sportsgrounds are always well maintained and available for all residents to use. Council manages and maintains five sportsgrounds across the district.



Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 5% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 95% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.42** towards this activity.

## 7 Economic Development



Council is investing in promoting the South Waikato as an economically viable place for business and industry as well as having tourism opportunities. With the aid of the newly established Economic Development Trusts, Council is focussed on encouraging strong economic development, promoting the South Waikato as a place to invest, funding information centres, and marketing tourism opportunities, training and educational expansion for the district and signature events.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.34** towards this activity.

## 11 Other community support



Community development covers many activities including arts, events and culture - all of which strengthen our community cohesion and feed our community pride and spirit. Council encourages youth development through initiatives with other organisations, advocates on behalf of the community, manages social development contracts and funds and coordinates events like Anzac Day celebrations and Neighbourhood Parties.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.53** towards this activity.

## 8 Building Services



Council is an accredited Building Consent Authority (BCA) which manages, processes and inspects consented building work. The Building Control Team administers this process, which is designed to ensure that buildings within the South Waikato meet all the criteria under the Building Act 2004. This can be anything from processing the application, inspecting building work during construction, issuing code of compliance certificates and administering building warrants of fitness. Around 450 building consent applications are processed each year.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 50% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 50% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.38** towards this activity.

## 12 Community contracts and grants



Council grants funding to a number of organisations. Funded through this area are the Information Centres, the Waikato River Trails, Putāruru Timber Museum, the Plaza, Sport Waikato and event funding. This area also funds the Community Development Grants that support community groups and their volunteers through a number of recreational, cultural, welfare and social activities. Financial assistance is given directly from Council or administered by Council on behalf of other parties.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.86** towards this activity.

## 13 Pools

Council provides safe hygienic pools for recreation and sporting activities. Public swimming pools are located in Tokoroa, Putāruru and Tirau. The pool facility in Tokoroa is an indoor, heated, all year round operation. The outdoor pools in Putāruru and Tirau are seasonal facilities, open during summer months only. The South Waikato Indoor Pools in Tokoroa run several programmes from wobble classes to learn to swim classes.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 20% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 80% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.93** towards this activity.



## 14 Planning

Every day, people apply for resource consents for activities such as building a new business development or subdividing their properties. Resource consents are processed in accordance with Council's District Plan and under the Resource Management Act (RMA). The RMA promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources such as land, air and water. Council's duty is to ensure rigorous assessment of resource consent applications. Around 55 resource consent applications are processed each year.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 65% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 35% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$0.94** towards this activity.



## 15 Libraries

The South Waikato has three libraries, one in each of the three largest towns, Tirau, Putāruru and Tokoroa. The Library in Putāruru serves a dual role as a service centre. Our libraries offer a wide range of services including books, e-books, puzzles, internet services, CDs, DVDs and much more.

The library team run programmes for all ages of children from school holiday activity programmes to celebrating national promotion weeks like Māori Language Week and Library Week, among others.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 10% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 90% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$1.01** towards this activity.



## 16 Parks, playgrounds and reserves

The South Waikato is a beautiful place to live, work and play, with more than 240 hectares of parks, reserves and playgrounds on our doorstep. Council's parks and reserves includes 48 urban reserves, six lakeside reserves, five scenic bush reserves, two recreational reserves and the Te Waihou Walkway. These parks and reserves also house the district's 13 playgrounds and our three skateparks. We also maintain a number of plantation strips, flowerbeds and roadside gardens. Council maintains the grounds, keeps environmental issues in check and makes sure all equipment is safe and in good condition.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 5% of this activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 95% is funded by rates.

Every week you contribute **\$1.16** towards this activity.



## 17 Stormwater

Council's role in stormwater drainage is to provide effective drainage and disposal so that the roading network can function effectively and safely, reduce the risks to people from stormwater ponding for long periods and to mitigate the environmental effects of contamination of the stormwater discharge. There are 116.85 km of stormwater pipes, open drains and watercourse in the urban stormwater network.

Stormwater drainage is also to prevent flooding of private property and to take stormwater from properties and road surfaces in pipes and open drains and disperse it into water courses.

This activity is fully funded by targeted rates (urban ratepayers only).

Every week you contribute **\$1.21** towards this activity.



## 18 Governance and corporate

All costs of operating Council including those associated with elections and the governance function itself, come under this heading. Corporate costs include things like corporate communication, financial and rating services, information systems, strategic policy and legal services and our long term and annual plan document development, including consultation with our community.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy:

- 100% of this district governance and corporate management activity is funded by rates
- 100% of community governance (ie the Tirau Community Board) is funded by targeted rates (Tirau Ward ratepayers only).

Every week you contribute **\$1.41** towards this activity.



## 19 Refuse collection and recycling



Waste management involves a number of activities. Council owns and manages a Transfer Station in Putāruru and a landfill in Tokoroa. We do an urban household weekly refuse collection and an urban fortnightly recycling collection. We manage five recycling stations across the district.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy:

- 70% of the landfill activity is funded by the users (ie, fees and charges) and 30% is funded by rates
- 100% of recycling is funded by rates
- 100% of refuse collection is funded by rates (targeted to urban users).

Every week you contribute **\$1.53** towards this activity.

## 20 Roads



The South Waikato has 537km of roads, 170km of footpaths, 48 bridges and large culverts, 36 stock underpasses, 3,830 signs and 2,576 streetlights. To ensure that travel around the district is as safe as possible, all of these assets are regularly maintained and improved upon.

Under Council's current revenue and financing policy 100% of this activity is funded by rates (after subsidies - average 50%).

Every week you contribute **\$3.91** towards this activity.

## 21 Water supply



Water - it's for cleaning, drinking, showering, swimming and a whole lot more. It is the one thing we simply can't live without! Council aims to provide a safe and reliable supply of water to residential, industrial and commercial properties. It also plays a role in supporting community safety through fire fighting capability.

There is a targeted rate for water supply (for urban properties only).

Every week you contribute **\$4.83** towards this activity.

## 22 Wastewater



Ever wondered what happens when you flush the toilet? Ever thought where the water from the dishwasher goes? Ever considered what would happen if you had to deal with it all yourself? Council's role in wastewater is paramount to public health and safety. We collect, remove and treat wastewater from all urban households to make it safe to discharge into the environment, either into a waterway or onto land. Council is beholden to resource consents that are issued by the regional council to ensure our discharge has minimal effect on the environment. Council has four water treatment systems.

There is a targeted rate for wastewater (for urban properties only).

Every week you contribute **\$5.43** towards this activity.

## And from value for money, to a complete waste of money!



Staff noticed this street sign in Putaruru recently. It had been kicked or pushed over in a deliberate act of vandalism. Let's look at what's involved in repairing the result of this nonsense behaviour.

- The broken pole (in the cement base) was dug out and removed.
- The pole itself was replaced with a steel pole to deter people kicking it.
- The street signs themselves were intact, not bent so could be reused, these were re-attached to the new steel pole with new clamps.

- The new sign was re-installed.
- All up to replace this sign cost \$358.54 (materials and labour).

Not the most effective way to spend ratepayer funding!

Vandalism of signs, trees, plants, tagging and other behaviour that results in damage to public property costs Council (and ratepayers) thousands of dollars each year. If you see vandalism, please report it.

## Council is against Cannabinoids

As much as we as a Council would like to ban these substances entirely, we can't. They are legal under the Act. In addition, our jurisdiction relates to outlet location only.

Council held a workshop recently to discuss the control of psychoactive substances related to the location of outlets, which under the Act is the only part that councils have jurisdiction over. It must be remembered that it is the Ministry of Health (MoH) that approves licenses, not councils.

Council has decided to progress a policy (called a Local Approved Products Policy). Staff were given direction by Councillors based on the discussion. Representatives from the Police and District Health Board were present at the workshop to provide detail and answer questions. The key question facing Council is where these outlets should be located. We can do this by specifying an area where outlets may establish or by using buffer zones from

sensitive sites. Both options have advantages and disadvantages, all of which will be detailed in public consultation documents.

Other points discussed were around the work done by Hamilton City Council, the closures that the MoH imposed, a watch and wait on the legal precedent/fallout on this issue, where outlets should be located (CBD, outlying areas), among many other points. Once Council has approved the draft policy, it will go out to the community for public consultation. Please engage in this process. **It is imperative that the community provide Council with direction and support.**

Following the temporary closure of outlets in Hamilton there has been an increase in the number of people frequenting outlets in the nearby town of Te Awamutu. With Cambridge also close to adopting its policy, Council is mindful that the same increase could be seen in Tokoroa.

# Animal Control and the community

Animal Control comes under fire a lot. Dog control especially is often an emotive issue and Council acknowledges that tensions can exist between ourselves and the community. There are probably a number of reasons for this, including a lack of understanding of the role of the officers, a lack of knowledge of the Act and situations that arise around repeat offending, irresponsible dog owners.

The basic role of the Animal Control Officer is to keep uncontrolled dogs out of public places in the interest of public safety. We simply can't have dogs roaming around our neighbourhoods with no control, dogs creating a constant nuisance for other people, and continually tolerate repeat offenders.

Other duties include:

- Respond to all issues regarding dogs. These include hygiene issues, barking complaints, roaming, unregistered dogs, aggression and attacks.
  - Manage and operate the pound.
  - Mediate disputes between dog owners and their neighbours.
  - Resolve voluntary handovers, often emotional, where dogs have attacked people or other animals, so as to avoid lengthy and expensive court processes.
  - Educate the community on good dog ownership and dog behaviour.
- Council also has an active adopt a dog programme. Council's dogs that are put up for adoption come from two main sources:
- Dogs that have been picked up roaming, are not registered or microchipped (so staff can't locate its owner). These dogs are held for seven days. If they are claimed by the owner in that time, then fines are paid and the dog returns home. If they are not claimed within that seven day period, and have been behaviour assessed as suitable for rehoming.

- Dogs that have been voluntarily handed over by their owner for reasons other than aggression, such as when an owner wishes to find a new home because they are emigrating. If deemed to have suitable behaviour, these dogs are put up for adoption.

Dogs leave the pound microchipped and the fee is \$50 plus any outstanding registration fees. Staff encourage the new owner to have the dog sterilised, if not already. Generally the dog to be adopted is dropped at the vet for this procedure and the new owner collects the dog from there.



## Happy home for Suzy Q

Everyone likes good news stories and Suzy Q and Heather Shepherd are just one such story. After reading a Letter to the Editor from Council's CE Craig Hobbs regarding our Animal Control service that mentioned our Adopt a Dog Programme, she decided to pop onto our website and have a look.

"I was immediately taken with Suzy Q," said Heather. "I tried to resist, but she got the better of me and after about a week I went back on-line thinking she's bound to have gone, but she hadn't, so I called the pound."

"Adopting Suzy Q through Council's Animal Control team was easy as," she continued. "The team were great and Suzy Q is just awesome. I am thrilled that I have been able to give such a lovely dog a new home. She has settled right in and it feels like I have had her forever."

The Animal Control team love that Heather regularly brings Suzy Q in for a quick visit too.



## What is good dog ownership?

We are fortunate that there are a large number of excellent dog owners in our district. But we also have a number of irresponsible dog owners who have little regard for the welfare of their animal, the law and community safety. Have a look at the table below:

|                                   | Responsible dog owner   | Irresponsible dog owner  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Taking responsibility             | Understands that owning a dog comes with responsibilities, many outlined below. Understands and accepts that having a dog costs money and can afford to have one.   | Doesn't pay registration fees; gets irritated when picked up and fined for breaking the law; is a repeat offender under the law. If you can't afford a dog, don't get one!   |
| Kennel/housing                    | Provides clean, weather proof kennel that is the correct size for the dog with clean, comfortable bedding, that is warm enough in winter. Has an appropriately fenced garden that has enough room for daily play and is secure so the dog cannot get out. | Leaves dog to the elements with no kennel, out in the weather. Leaves dog tied to a tree or vehicle that does not provide suitable shelter from the elements, especially in winter. Has an insecurely fenced property that enables the dog to escape and roam. |
| Food/water                        | Provides fresh water daily, especially on hot summer days, and feeds appropriate dog food in quantities suitable for weight of dog.   | Doesn't keep water bowl filled or fresh, leaves dog to drink from drains and puddles. Feeds human food leftovers instead of nutritionally balanced dog food.   |
| Exercise/love/attention           | Takes dog for regular walks, plays ball/fetch with the dog, displays affection/cuddles towards the dog.   | Leaves a dog tied up in the back garden, all alone, doesn't play with the dog, walk the dog or display any love or attention.  |
| Registration                      | Registers dog every year by the due date of 31 July.  | Doesn't register their dog; complains when caught with no registration.  |
| Microchipping                     | Ensures dog is microchipped so if found/stolen, owner can be located easily.  | Doesn't microchip dog so that when found roaming, officers can't locate the owner.   |
| Vaccinations/medical care/bathing | Ensures vaccinations are up to date on an annual basis. Regularly deworms and defleas. Regularly bathes dog.  | Doesn't vaccinate, leaves dog with worm and flea infestations. Dog is left dirty and unwashed for months.  |
| Socialisation                     | Actively looks for opportunities to socialise the dog with people and other dogs, especially as puppies.  | Doesn't allow the dog to socialise with people or other dogs as a puppy. Actively encourages 'anti-social' behaviour.  |

## Chinese Consulate Visit

At the end of February Council hosted a very senior visit by the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Auckland, plus three other senior members of his staff (representing education, commerce, local government and overseas Chinese) and the Managing Directors of COSCO NZ (China Shipping), China Travel Services, Southern China Airways and Yashili NZ.

"This high-powered group have a strong business orientated focus on investment opportunities in our district," said Mayor Neil Sinclair. "We

have developed our relationship with the Chinese Consul-General over the past few years, cemented more recently during my visit to Auckland (along with Council Chief Executive Craig Hobbs). The potential to open up many doors with Chinese businesses and investors in the future to the benefit of the South Waikato is important to future economic growth for our district."

The group visited our key tourist attractions and several investment opportunity projects/sites.



## RAL second appeal dismissed

Two and a half years after being taken to the High Court by Roading and Asphalt Ltd (RAL) regarding the awarding of the landfill management contract, RAL's second appeal to the Supreme Court has been dismissed.

This is again great news for Council and our ratepayers. Council was surprised by the initial ruling as we felt that our tender process was managed appropriately and the tender documents worded accurately. Our confidence in how the process was handled was the reason for appealing the initial decision.

Following the initial High Court decision, Council paid the settlement amount of \$472,830.87 into a holding

account. This was repaid in full plus Council's Court of Appeal legal costs. Following the second appeal dismissal, RAL will again reimburse Council's legal costs.

The legal disagreement occurred when Council didn't award the landfill management contract to the lowest tenderer. Council believed that the tender documentation clearly stated that it may not necessarily select the lowest tender price, depending on other factors, whereas RAL felt that the document indicated that Council must accept the lowest tender.

Council is pleased at the final outcome and the fact that the decision by the Supreme Court brings an end to the issue.



## Talking safety with our Police



Recently social media has played an ever evolving role in occurrences throughout our district. Whether good or bad these occurrences have brought with them a myriad of responses via social media in the form of robust conversations as well as what can only be termed derogatory and inflammatory comments or messages.

Reminding those who utilise this type of forum, social media is not a place to air your ill feelings or displeasure and has become a constant battle for Police. Although regulated it does not allow for robust intervention and often our role is that of mediator to try and curve future incidents. Technology is becoming advanced to the stage where people can remotely defame, bully and harass others without being in the same province and more recently country.

These advancements also allow for a criminal element to take advantage of those not technology savvy, as recently seen with an elderly person within the Taupō Policing area who lost \$30,000 to scammers. Tokoroa Police believe it is timely to remind our community about the perils of technology and the need to take stock and consider what you would term proper use as well as having excellent security in place.

Negative messages and or comments via social media should not spark an automatic response as the only person who benefits is the person who initiated the comment. The old saying "sticks and stones" couldn't ring more true when dealing with these immature, cowardly comments.

Finally, if you receive an offer, deal or Lotto win from overseas and it appears too good to be true... "IT IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE." Do not be fooled and do not send any money off-shore.

## What's on at The Plaza?

The Plaza continues to be a hive of activity and we are always on the lookout for new events.

### Movie Afternoons

We would like to re-introduce once a month movie events. If there is a special movie you would like to see screened let us know. With your support we will continue to keep movies playing.

Yoga Classes run weekly on Wednesday nights at 6pm. Shivana Kant is our qualified Yoga instructor who has a lifetime of experience.

Here are just a few comments from some of our ladies who attend Shivana's Class:

"I really enjoy coming along to Yoga. I find it very relaxing and feel good afterwards, as well as a good night sleep."

"I have been attending the Yoga Classes every Wednesday at 6pm at the Plaza since they started and have been thoroughly enjoying them."

"Yoga is a great form of relaxation and stress relief and suitable for all ages. Tutor Shavani Kant has many years of experience, giving one-on-one attention so if you would like to try something different and meet new people I would highly recommend it, come along and have some fun."

Remember gentlemen, Yoga is not just for the ladies. If you are interested do join in.

On 11 May 2014 at 2.30pm the South Waikato Music Society presents Ke Lin, pianist. Born in Shanghai, Ke Lin moved to Australia at age 12, and has gone on to become a multi-prize-winning virtuoso pianist. He will present a programme of some of the most stunning works in the piano repertoire by Chopin, Liszt and Ravel (Gaspard de la nuit). This will be a real treat for South Waikato music lovers.



## IN brief continued...

- 74 dogs were impounded between 1 February and 14 March. Of these, 32 were euthanized, 26 were claimed, two were rehomed and 14 left in the pound. There were three attacks during the period, all on people.
- The current fire danger remains on high. The grass is still very dry. Fire permits are issued on a case by case basis with the necessary precautions.
- The district is currently under water restrictions. We are at water alert level 1. This means that sprinklers can only be used between 6am and 8am AND between 6am and 8pm. Please continue to be mindful of the dry conditions and save on water use where possible.
- The South Waikato Sport and Events Centre runs sports leagues for young and old each week night. Mondays is badminton, Tuesday volleyball, Wednesday and Thursday senior and secondary school netball with Fun Ferns netball starting in April on a Fridays. Mid-week badminton also starts in April during the day with court space available on a Friday evening for casual hire. In addition, there are function rooms available for your next birthday, meeting or get-together. Contact events centre staff on 885 1059 for more information.

## IN the know

You can now pay your rates (and parking fines) on-line. Visit our website [www.southwaikato.govt.nz](http://www.southwaikato.govt.nz) and click on the orange 'Pay It' button on the right hand side.

This column features a snippet about Council. Got a question, drop an email to [kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz](mailto: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](mailto:kerry.fabrie@southwaikato.govt.nz).

## Councillor Column Adrienne Bell

Here we are in March already and it's hard to believe that nearly six months have passed since the last local body elections.

This is a busy time of year for Council. In addition to regular Council meetings, we have had a number of workshops to inform us on various issues on which we are required to make decisions. One of these issues is the Draft Annual Plan which is currently out for public consultation. The Plan lists a number of areas where we have proposed a reduction in spending in order to reduce the estimated rates rise and we'd like to receive submissions from people who are happy with Council's draft budget as well as from those who aren't and may have suggestions.

Councils have had a lot of extra work and expense inflicted on them over the past few years with the passing of numerous new legislations. These have required new building codes and monitoring, expensive upgrades to drinking water and wastewater systems, the restoration of the health of the Waikato River, air quality monitoring and improvements, the protection of Significant Natural Areas, new Alcohol Accords and Psychoactive Substances Policies to devise and implement, roading improvements to handle the new larger trucks coming onto our roads and so on.

Meanwhile, like other Councillors, I belong to a number of non profit organisations that continue to work hard to help ensure that this a great district in which to live.



## Councillor Column Bill Machen

After six months experience I believe your new council has worked productively and harmoniously in the interests of all citizens of the South Waikato. There has been much reading done of reports, minutes and agendas, and a succession of meetings attended, plus conversations with concerned citizens who either call or ring me with the opening words "You're on the Council – aren't you?" As I am now retired from work, I manage to fit this all in. Highlights of deliberations to date follow.

We have set up a Trust which will be independent of Council to manage the \$20 million dollars share monies for the benefit of the South Waikato. An Appointments Board that will decide whom the Trustees to this important Trust should be will be announced in the near future.

\$5 million dollars has been set aside for local projects and initiatives; local citizens are asked to submit to Council any ideas they have on where this money can best be invested.

We have reviewed and published for comment the local bylaws in relation to the rural fire regulations and dog control matters.

In the last week we have had a productive workshop where we had expert input from the Police and District Health Board on the issues surrounding psychoactive substances and the issues around regulating what is a legal business in Tokoroa. Many people have asked Council do something about the shop in Bridge Street but in many respects the Council's hands are tied by Government legislation. Hamilton City Council has stuck its head out and made a decision that may (or may not) end up in court and our Council knows just how much taking the lead on legal precedent can cost. We await the outcome with interest, but in the meantime are drafting a policy for the South Waikato to control any future location of such shops.

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