

Annual Plan deliberations and decisions

Public hearings were held in mid-May following consultation on the draft Annual Plan 2016-17.

Council had proposed a 2.9% average increase in rates revenue. Following consultation and submissions from the community, deliberation decisions resulted in a final slightly higher rates revenue increase of 3.94%. Council was extremely reluctant to accept a rate increase to 3.94% and spent a long time looking at what they could do to reduce it, but couldn't find any acceptable way of doing this. They also recognised the impact that this will have on our dairy farmers and businesses reliant on dairy farming, especially because of the dairy downturn.

Council received 192 submissions. We acknowledge the time people took in providing valuable feedback on our draft plan. Key decisions made following discussions are detailed below, continuing over the page.

No budget required:

- Investigate parking options at the Tirau Cemetery.
- Improve promotion of the Rates Postponement Policy to increase awareness of this policy in the dairy sector.
- Consider reallocating funds previously allocated to the Waikato River Trails, for a mobile van, once a feasibility study for a transport proposal is available from WRT.
- Investigate the possibility of spraying willows at Lake Moananui.
- Install leisure equipment at the Okoroire Street Reserve in Tirau.
- Reallocate some of the \$51,520 available for additional exercise stations at Lake Moananui to Okoroire Street Reserve in Tirau.
- Investigate the possibility of delisting the Tokoroa Airfield and delay the resealing of the runway until the delisting investigation is complete.
- Replace the guttering at the ATC clubrooms from existing operational budgets.

Initiatives that will NOT be funded this time round, or budgets that have been cut:

- To not fund a \$5,000 contract with Super Sports.
- To not fund the South Waikato Arts Trust with \$23,000 towards the replacement of the Plaza curtains and the Arthur Fountain studio toilets.
- To not fund Pride in Putāruru with an additional \$20,000 per year and \$5,000 one-off cost of technology to deliver a range of services that will no longer be provided by the i-SITE.
- Reduce Staff budgets by \$70,000.



“Council is fortunate to have so many people in our community engaged and interested in what Council does and what we spend our funding on,” said Mayor Neil Sinclair. “Ideas, suggestions and comments on current projects are valued and discussed at length. At the end of the day decisions need to balance what people want with what is affordable so hard decisions need to be made on what is a priority for our community.”

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IN brief

- The Warm Homes Clean Air programme, now into its 12th year continues to provide clean heating for South Waikato homes - 44 clean heat installations have occurred under the On the House scheme, 77 installations under Split the Bill and 11 installations under Buy Now Pay Later. A further 98 homes have been insulated as part of the Healthy Homes scheme.
- Carpentry students at the Tokoroa Trade Training Centre have started work on a wood storage unit that will be used to promote good wood storage.

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IN house

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

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Additional items that require new budget or a change to current funding:

- Waive the South Waikato Achievement Trust's rental for Croad Place by 50%, ie a waive of \$20,000 due to the downturn in the recycling industry.
- Improve accessibility of the Tirau Hall entrance at a cost of \$6,000.
- Fund St John the cost of a new van (\$27,000) to enable a health shuttle from the South Waikato to health campuses in Hamilton.
- Look at the possibility of installing a table and rubbish bin at the Kindergarten Street Reserve. If this is to be funded, the \$2,500 cost will be funded out of the pensioner housing fund.
- Increase maintenance at The Plaza at a cost of \$5,000.
- Increase maintenance at the Tirau Cemetery at a cost of \$3,000.
- Increase maintenance at a number of parks and reserves at a cost of \$68,000.
- Trim or remove some trees identified by an arborist as being a safety concern, at a cost of \$16,500.
- Fund the maintenance of the CCTV cameras in Tokoroa through a targeted rate on the Tokoroa Ward as opposed to a rate on CBD businesses.
- Fund the Timber Museum Trust to mow the reserve land at a cost of \$13,000 and continue discussions with the Trust about ensuring that artefacts held by the Trust can be used by the community.
- Fund \$199,500 from the roading reserve fund to allow the traffic plans in Tirau to progress as part of the Tirau traffic and parking project. Council staff will continue to work with the

Tirau community to produce specific plans. This work will include the development of a new toilet at the top of the hill.



- Increase the roading budget by \$21,000 to continue ongoing participation in the RATA initiative.

Te Waihou

The largest topic that Council asked for feedback on this time round was Te Waihou. Council is very aware of the issues that have resulted from the huge increase in visitors to the Blue Spring over this past summer. It has been imperative to thoroughly investigate the situation and analyse all the data and views that we have received from visitors, neighbours, submitters and partners.

Council's primary focus is to discourage swimming at Te Puna (Blue Spring) and strengthen promotion of the attraction as a walkway.

The following decisions have been made:

- Increase budget by \$5,800 to address issues around swimming in Te Puna. The actions involved will include:
 - Undertake a concept development/design plan.
 - Undertake works to close the stairs/access to the water.
 - Identify alternative swimming locations with Raukawa Kaumatua and install signage to communicate alternative swimming locations to Te Puna.
- Increase the Resource Management and Policy budget by \$10,000 to contribute towards the cost of developing a Co-Management Agreement with Raukawa on

\$5 million projects update

In 2014 Council allocated just under \$5million to 16 community and economic projects. This article is a brief update on where those projects are at, with a larger focus on the pensioner housing development which is entering the construction phase.

- The road rail terminal is operational and final work is expected to be complete by June.
 - The Rangiora Retirement Village expansion project is complete.
 - Phase 1 of the Cougar Park Upgrade is complete. The project is on hold until Hancock Forest Management have completed the harvesting in the area.
 - Upgrades at the South Waikato Motocross track are almost complete. The kitchen flooring, clubrooms carpet and lino, painting, shed, marshal hut and drainage have all been completed. The only aspects of the refurbishment project that are left are the installation of new start gates, and electrical and plumbing costs associated with the kitchen work.
 - The purchase of Tokoroa Hospice equipment is complete.
 - The hall alterations at St John Youth Hall are complete.
 - The Tirau Walkway is moving through several processes including detailed design of the pedestrian crossing and KiwiRail approval and a resource consent process to construct a footbridge over the Oraka stream.
 - The additional funding for upgrades to the Te Waihou Walkway has been fully spent, however staff are now planning further upgrades as a result of the Annual Plan process and the tremendous increase in visitors numbers over the recent summer period.
 - The Tirau Traffic Study is complete and the Annual Plan now includes \$200,000 funding for pedestrian, signage, parking and toilet improvements.
 - The Putāruru Moving Forward steering group is making good progress. Town branding and the resourcing of future development are key focus areas. Feedback through the Annual Plan consultation has been filtered to the steering group.
 - The Tokoroa High School Academy project is complete and the school is getting massive utilisation out of the vans.
 - The Friends of the Lake Committee has been established and funding allocated to that project will be discussed along with a planting/project plan.
 - Funding of \$50,000 was allocated to a nutrient study however that has been redirected into a water allocation project. A water allocation model for the Upper
- Waikato is being developed but has hit a snag regarding calibrating the model. If that snag persists beyond June this year, it is possible the project will be shelved.
- The welding workshop at the Trade Training Centre is complete and the course is bedding down well.
 - The public transport trial has proved very successful for the Tokoroa circuit, with lower use of the district circuit. The trial was enhanced to include a student service. The trial has been extended several times most recently until 30 June this year. Council will be deciding which services will continue for the 2016-17 shortly. Transportation to Waikato Hospital is not yet in place.

future management of Te Waihou.

- No increase to monitoring and enforcement budgets to address issues at Te Waihou Walkway.
- A \$6,000 increase in budget to address safety issues at the Leslie Road end of Te Waihou. This budget will cover:
 - The installation of barriers on identified unsafe corners to prevent parking.

Swimming at the Blue Spring is having a significant impact on the environment. The photos to the right (courtesy of the Department of Conservation) clearly show the impact on the environment.

Right: View of the Blue Spring environment taken in November 2014.

Far right: View of the Blue Spring environment taken in February 2016.

- The installation of barriers (movable) at the access to prevent parking blocking the access.
- Allocate \$15,000 to increase parking at the Whites Road end of Te Waihou Walkway and to cover the cost of any signage that needs to be installed or replaced.
- Install a new toilet at the Whites Road end of Te Waihou Walkway at a cost of \$30,000 and an ongoing annual maintenance cost of \$5,000.
- To not install a new toilet at the Leslie Road end of Te Waihou Walkway.
- Remove the sign advertising Te Waihou Walkway/ Blue Spring at the Leslie/

Whites Road intersection to discourage use of the Leslie Road end.

- Increase the annual maintenance budget for Te Waihou Walkway by \$20,000 to increase Council contractor support during peak season, to achieve toilet cleaning and litter collection seven days a week over peak season.



Spotlight on the Pensioner Housing project

The Pensioner Housing project is making steady progress.

The project was initially earmarked to be a partnership project between Council and Waiariki using carpentry students to construct the units. Unfortunately that arrangement did not come to fruition because the project would have been spread over a number of years which would not have been ideal for local residents. However Council is pleased that it has contracted a local building contractor JK Homes that will be working with Gateway students from Forest View High School to build the units under the supervision of qualified builders. Council's Pensioner Housing Project Manager, who is also a Licensed Building Practitioner, will continue to oversee the project.

"Council is very pleased that we are still able to build the units using a council-business-community partnership utilising local labour and further developing and training our young people," said Ben Smit, Council's Deputy Chief Executive. "An added benefit is that the project to build the

six units will now only take two years rather than the three to four years it was originally going to take."

Council and Waiariki remain committed to identifying and developing education and training opportunities for young people through continued support of the hugely successful Tokoroa Trade Training Centre.

"It was an easy decision for us to put in a quote for the project," said Kylie Kingi of JK Homes.

"We fully support on-the-job training and providing young people the opportunities to gain trade skills. We also support sourcing labour locally and creating employment opportunities here in the South Waikato."

Supporting youth moving from training into business is second nature to Kylie and husband Jovan who employed two Waiariki students two years ago. Both students are now apprentices and still work for

the company today.

"We also liked the idea of building new, warm and comfortable homes for our older people," she continued.

To date, all earthworks have been completed, the RibRaft flooring has been installed and foundations laid. Part of the permanent fence has been installed with the remainder of the site still cordoned off with temporary fencing.



2016 Honouring Youth Awards

The South Waikato can rest assured its future is in capable hands after this year's Honouring Youth Awards.

The 2016 awards saw 22 of the South Waikato's brightest youth celebrated for their hard work and contributions in our district.

Congratulations to all who were nominated and a special congratulations to the overall winners of the night; Jessica Paterson - Change Maker award, Toka Natua - Giving Back award, Stace Kopa - Leadership award, and Meriol Tearetoa and Ahleah Paul-Kaponga - Working for Youth award.

"I was fortunate to be asked to be a judge for the Youth Awards," said Deputy Mayor Jenny Shattock. "It was an incredibly difficult task to decide on winners for each of the four categories. We have some unbelievably talented young

people in our district who are an absolute inspiration."

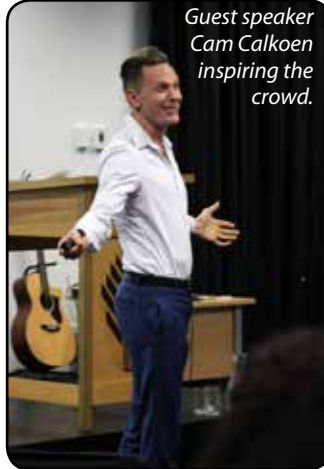
This year's award ceremony was carried out during Youth Week, and was one of many activities for youth delivered by the South Waikato Community Collective. The awards evening was organised by the South Waikato Youth Leadership and Advisory board (YLAB).

"Everyone involved did a fantastic job, the event was organised by youth for youth," commented Council's Community Resources Co-ordinator, Amanda West, "Everyone had a wonderful evening and I'm excited about the number of talented young people we have in our community."

One of the highlights of the night was listening to guest speaker Cam Calkoen who was born with Cerebral Palsy and

has represented New Zealand in athletics. He founded the Carabiner Mentoring program, and is now an inspirational speaker.

Thank you to Cam, and everyone who helped us celebrate our youth, we can't wait to see what next year brings.



Guest speaker
Cam Calkoen
inspiring the crowd.

Awards...

Change Maker

- Braiden Allen-Vano
- Monica-Li Bennion
- Tiare Manu
- Phylis Horn
- Jessica Paterson

Overall winner
Jessica Paterson

Giving Back

- Trinity Deane
- Chance TeMiha
- Aroa Turia
- Toka Natua
- Danielle White

Overall winner
Toka Natua

Leadership

- Amber Mahia
- Stace Kopa
- Bocky Blackburn
- Malachi Manu
- Chloe Herman
- Umatetiki Takave
- Shavaughan Uerata
- Monique Limmer
- Teariki-Terae Tearoa-Natua
- Sione Leva

Overall winner
Stace Kopa

Working for Youth

Overall winners
Meriol Tearetoa &
Ahleah Paul-Kaponga

The 2016 Honouring Youth Awards recipients



Jessica Paterson



Toka Natua



Stace Kopa



Ahleah Paul-Kaponga

Meriol Tearetoa



Burn better this winter, with our **HOT TIPS!**

When you use your woodburner 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.

If you haven't collected your wood yet you can purchase dry wood, ready to burn straight away from our Burnwise suppliers. Find their contact details at the bottom of this column.

If you have a woodburner that is more than 10 years old it is no longer considered compliant. Now is a great time to look into Council's Warm Homes Clean Air Schemes - On the House, Split the Bill and Buy Now Pay Later.

For more information regarding our air quality and what Council is doing to help our community visit www.southwaikato.govt.nz - Our Services - Air Quality/Heating.

BURN WISE

GOOD WOOD
from GREAT SUPPLIERS

- Tokoroa Firewood Ltd
0508 367 9663
- Balmoral Firewood Supplies
07 886 7550
- Central Bay Firewood
07 886 6387
- South Waikato Achievement Centre
07 886 8941

Croad Place nice and close

Just a reminder to our Tokoroa community that you don't need to drive all the way out to the Tokoroa landfill to get rid of your excess recycling. The Croad Place recycling facility is much closer and open seven days a week. Service at the facility also includes assistance and the offload area is covered, particularly useful in wet weather. The opening times at Croad Place are:

- Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm
- Weekends and most public holidays*, 9am to 1pm

* closed on Christmas Day, New Years Day, Good Friday and until 12 noon on Anzac Day



Thinking of standing for Council?

Passionate community leaders are encouraged to start thinking about running for Council. Standing for a local council is an incredible opportunity for people to be involved in the future direction of the district and communities.

Candidate nominations are open from 15 July 2016 however potential candidates need to start thinking about their future in local government now. It is hoped that a pool of competent and passionate candidates will drive even more people to vote.

Standing for a local council is a great way to step up and have real influence over the key issues affecting their families, friends and communities.

If you are thinking about standing for Council, the time to come forward is fast approaching.

Did you know that only 42% of New Zealanders voted in the 2013 Council elections?

- 31% felt they didn't know enough about the candidates
- 14% were not interested in voting
- 24% forgot to vote or left it too late to vote
- 14% felt they were too busy to vote

If you live in the South Waikato and you love the South Waikato, the power to vote is in your hands!

Remember you need to be enrolled to vote. To **ENROL** or to check your enrolment details visit www.elections.org.nz/voters/enrol-check-or-update-now. **If you're not ENROLLED you won't receive VOTING papers in the post!**

You have the power to VOTE use it!

What's **Q**

Mark your calendar

START careers expo, 20 June, South Waikato Sport and Events Centre

Wera Aotearoa Charitable Trust (WACT) 3 on 3 Basketball Competition, Friday 22 July, Sport and Events Centre - a fun youth activity during the school holidays

Fashion and Wearable Arts Show, Friday 5 August, Sport and Events Centre

Election Day, Saturday 8 October 2016 - You have the power. Use it. Vote in the 2016 Council elections

Torpedo Day Night Thriller, Saturday 8 October, Cougar Mountain Bike Park, Tokoroa

The Taniwha, Saturday 5 November, Waikato River Trails, South Waikato. Visit www.thetaniwha.co.nz

The Generator, Saturday 1 April 2017, Waikato River Trails. Visit www.waikatorivertrails.co.nz



We've got a variety of entertainment options coming up at The Plaza for you:

The NZ Creedence Clearwater Revival Tribute Show is booked for **Saturday 9 July 2016** - a live band delivering a top quality musical experience.

The North Shore Male Choir is showing **Sunday 11 September 2016**, 2pm, tickets \$25 Adults, \$20 Senior/Student. For the pure enjoyment of keeping alive the traditions of our founders, the North Shore Male Choir, with a membership of 50 today, continues to perform at concerts throughout the Auckland region and beyond. The Choir goes from strength to strength under the professional guidance of our Music Director, Lynn John, a Welsh Opera singer and tutor of renown.

The Topp Twins are here on **Saturday 8 October 2016**, 7pm, tickets \$40. New Zealand's national treasurers The Topp Twins - aka identical twin sisters Lynda and Jools Topp - have performed around the world as an original country-music comedy duo for more than 25 years and continue to delight audiences from the alternative to the mainstream. No other act has such unique cross-over appeal. On sale from June.

The Monroes showing on **Saturday 12 November 2016**, 8pm, tickets \$25. When the band hits the stage your jaw is sure to hit the floor.

In other exciting news we have our new Projector installed! Check our Facebook page, the South Waikato News or The Plaza website for updates on movie dates and times.



WHAT'S HOT



The funky new carpet at the Tokoroa Library.

Response to Animal Control's dog registration reminder mail-out has been really successful.

The introduction of Friends of the Lake to help enhance Lake Moananui by assisting with work programmes such as planting - the most recent working bee carried out at the southern end of Lake Moananui - painting the bridge, replanting and clearing rubbish from the dam face.

Council staff supporting the Lion Foundation Young enterprise scheme by mentoring, guiding and assisting students with their business projects that include a Pasifica recipe book (see photo - yum!) and a youth mentoring programme for year 8 students transitioning to year 9.



The new solid fuel heater application form making for quicker turn around.

Autumn leaves creating such pretty colours, makes for awesome Autumn photos.

The new anti-slip surface being trialled on a selection of our footpaths most known for slipping incidents. Council will monitor the success of these strips of footpath over the winter months. The trial areas are from Leith Place through to Mannering on Bridge Street northern side, Swanston Street along the taxi stand and Bridge Street southern side from

Rosebery Street to Mannering Street. The project allows for a 1.5m wide application at the centre of the footpath. The project will start once the rains stop!

Our emergency services seem to have had an awful lot of call-outs in Putāruru over the last couple of weeks so a hearty 'thank you for taking such good care of your community' to all of our emergency services volunteers and staff.

Barry Crump's books have been hot at the Library thanks to the release of the movie, Hunt for the Wilderpeople.

The fabulous response to our letter to registered dog owners recommending people set up automatic payments, make early payments, update records and opt for registration papers to be sent via email. See next page for the full story.

The successful rural fire season due to efforts by everyone, especially farmers - thank you for being safe and considerate.

Great collaboration and education opportunities for licenses and general managers through the Liquor Accord Group.

Both drainage projects are now complete on Old Taupo and Huihuitaha Road and the detours have been removed.

We were fortunate to catch up with Tokoroa born Silver Fern Maria Tutaia during her visit to Blue Pacific Minerals (BPM), a successful local business enjoying significant growth and expansion. BPM supplies Zeosoft with soft zeolite which is a key ingredient and key point of difference in their new skin cleansing range of products. Maria recently became involved with the Zeosoft business, and believes "the natural zeolite and silica minerals will change how women use skin cleansers". Maria is looking forward to involvement with the business as it develops locally and internationally. For us in Tokoroa, we can only be proud to call a talented beauty like Maria Tutaia one of our own. Zeosoft is set to take the world on, with product placement deals both nationally and internationally

pending. Blue Pacific Minerals is a great example of Council's commitment to its strategy to support and promote local business growth (and new business development). We are thrilled to learn of this new relationship and BPM's growth both in terms of new business opportunities and provision of jobs, and the continued diversity of economic opportunities for the South Waikato.



WHAT'S NOT



Dog owners not picking up their dog's poo around the lake - free poo bags can be collected from Council.

Autumn leaves - messy and slippery! Council has instructed the kerb side sweeping contractor to undertake additional sweeping to address the heavy leaf fall. High risk areas have been targeted where flooding is a problem.



Happy harnessing!

Do you have a dog that isn't good with children or adults and you need to let others know before they approach you when you are out walking your dog?

Are you frustrated with people judging your dog by 'the look of it', when in fact they have nothing to worry about?

Or maybe you have a dog that doesn't mind people but is not good with other dogs, yet other dogs come running up to your dog?

There are many more dog situations that cause problems and can be helped with a simple item.

Council's new range of colour-coded harnesses are available

for purchase at \$39 - and it could be the answer to a range of dog walking problems.

The harnesses are bright and visible from a distance to warn others in advance of the likely temperament of your dog based on easy to understand traffic light colour-coded system. They are very high quality and made from the best materials.

Because our loyal family members can't talk for themselves and sometimes need others to know their personality, wearing a colour-coded harness could mean more peaceful walks.

The harnesses come in green for 'friendly', orange for 'no dogs'

and red for 'caution' - an easy warning system for children too.

So next time you need to buy a new harness, why not pop in to Council and grab one of our super new harnesses.

These harnesses provide benefit for non-dog-owners too. If you come across a dog with a green harness, they will likely welcome a pet and a cuddle. If you have your own dog with you and you come across another dog with an orange harness, stay away - he doesn't like other dogs! And for dogs wearing a red harness, best you don't approach at all - give the dog the space it needs.

Doggie owners sign up for email regos

A massive 317 dog owners have signed up to have registrations emailed to them rather than posted. This consists of 98 rural dog owners and 219 urban dog owners. This is a new initiative Council introduced for the 2016-17 registration year.

"We are pleased with the uptake," said Council's Senior Animal Control Officer Kerry Beckett. "What is equally pleasing is the number of errors and updates that have come in following us sending out the letter to our dog owners."

Fifty six people have set up automatic payments to pay dog registration in advance automatically every year, 61 dog owners have requested Selected Owner Policy applications and 108 dog records were updated with details like new address, deceased dogs, neutered etc.

"The level of engagement from our community following the communication that was posted late April is very encouraging and we are keen to do more such communication," continued Mrs Beckett.

Winter care on frosty roads

Heading into the cold weather Council is undertaking an 'Icy Roads' campaign designed to highlight and inform drivers of the dangers of ice on the roads throughout the South Waikato.

Known roads will be targeted with billboards and residents will be reminded to inform Council if they encounter ice on the roads so that it can be dealt with as soon as possible.

Please remember the same goes for footpaths - so take care!

Here are a few road safety tips to keep you safe this winter:

- Reduce your speed
Slowing down is the most important thing you can do when driving on an icy road. High speeds make it both easy to lose control and difficult to stop.
- Pay attention to the weather
Make the weather forecast part of your daily routine during the winter. Be aware of the conditions and prepare for them.

- Avoid sudden braking
- Avoid sudden direction changes
- Leave large following distances
Follow the four second rule.
- Ice can remain on the road all day
Watch out for shaded spots
- Look for shiny, wet patches on the road



IN brief continued...

- The Library's ANZAC themed holiday reading programme saw 45 children read over 135 books during the two week holiday period.
- Patrongage at the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre is up by almost 4,000 over 2015.
- It is pleasing to see an improvement regarding our community's understanding of intersection rules. This year 70% of all entries answered all questions correctly compared to just 56% last year. The question that was answered most incorrectly is below (with the correct answer!).



Does the driver of the blue car have to give way?
Answer - No

- Council has introduced a quarterly community perception survey, replacing the three yearly survey to ensure data is more frequent and timely. We look forward to the responses and will share these once available.

IN the know

You can keep up to date with Council information via:
website:

www.southwaikato.govt.nz
facebook: www.facebook.com/SouthWaikatoDistrictCouncil
twitter: @SouthWaikatoDC

IN view

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

Councillor Column Herman van Rooijen

There is a saying (I think Chinese) that you may live in interesting times and if one is a dairy farmer, that is certainly so at present. After a few years of strong prices and rapidly increasing production, various factors on the world scene caused returns to fall dramatically.

As a rural person with a great passion for rural life, I feel for all involved and am of course aware that the effects go right through our whole community. I try to stay in touch with what is happening to people and know full well there is a lot of concern about where it is all going. I think there are rays of hope on the horizon and may we come out of it stronger and more resilient.

Our recent valuations were done at a high point in values and will have an effect on the balance in rates, however while this can impact rates we mustn't forget that increased property values are positive for the district too.

The pressures on farming on the environmental side are ongoing and of course of concern, but from where I sit I'm encouraged by the practical approach being taken and a lot of good learning.

I recently attended the open day on the farm which won the Balance Farm Environment competition. The acid test for good environmental practice is whether we can carry this on for a hundred years and can we convince our markets of this.

I think we are making good progress. Apart from current prices, farming is constantly moving forward and our whole community will benefit.

May we have a kind winter and may you all keep good health.

Councillor Column Marin Glucina

The South Waikato District Council has recently considered the submissions made by residents and ratepayers in respect of the Annual Plan and the Leith Place Development Project.

The submission process is the main method the residents and ratepayers of the District have to put their views forward to help the Council decide the spending priority for the district in regard to necessity/effectiveness and total cost.

The process is taken seriously by Council members and staff with all submissions being considered before a decision is made. Most submissions put forward were well thought out ideas and Council, if budget allowed would have adopted most of them.

One of the best aspects of the process is that each decision is evidenced based and has sound economic or social reasons to support it.

With our tight budget and desire to keep any rates revenue increase as low as possible, Council is reluctant to spend unless there is a proven need to do so.

The current Council is not political and each decision is taken in the best interest of the community and district.

Before scheduled meetings, Council holds regular citizenship ceremonies to welcome new citizens to the district and country. This is a proud moment for the new citizens. Council hosts them, their family and friends for morning tea before the ceremony. The Mayor speaks to the group, administers the oath of allegiance and then presents each new citizen with a native tree to plant. Council's Waiata group lead everyone in the national anthem in Māori, then English before singing several other waiata as part of this special ceremony.

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