



South Waikato abounds in natural beauty. This photograph is of the Waikato River. The sunset evokes emotions of tranquility. This beauty is right on our door step, so be sure to take it in before winter.

South Waikato Crowns Its Top Dog

In an event that has brought tails wagging and smiles spreading across the district, the inaugural 'South Waikato's Next Top Dog' competition wrapped up its first two weeks with a display of canine charisma that has the community barking with excitement.

The friendly competition, designed to showcase the best of the district's four-legged friends, saw an overwhelming participation of over 230 dogs, turning the event into a testament to our peoples' love for their pets.

The challenge of narrowing down such a large and adorable field to just five finalists was no small task. Judges based their decisions on criteria including cuteness, photo quality and emotional appeal, eventually presenting the community with five furry finalists: Ali, Buddy, Harley, Elmo and Post Malone. Each of these pups stood out for their unique charms, capturing hearts and stirring spirited discussions among locals.

As the competition moved into its final phase, the community was invited to vote for their favourite canine, turning the event into a wonderful display of civic engagement. The prize at stake? Not just bragging rights, but a free registration for the top three winners, with the top dog also securing a free photoshoot and the honour of becoming South Waikato's mascot for dog-related messaging until the next competition.

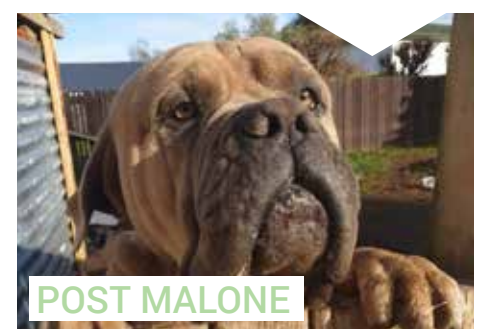
The votes were counted, and the anticipation that had been building reached its peak when Elmo was announced as South Waikato's Next Top Dog.

This charming pup not only won the hearts of the judges but also captured the community's adoration, securing the coveted title and the special prize. Following closely were Ali and Post Malone, who came in second and third, respectively, each winning a free registration for their undeniable appeal.

As Elmo prepares for his year in the limelight, and the community looks forward to the next competition, one thing is clear: South Waikato's love for their dogs is unmatched, and this event has 'pawed' its way into the hearts of all involved. Congratulations to Elmo, Ali, Post Malone and all the furry friends who participated, proving that every dog has its day.



ALI



POST MALONE



WINNER - ELMO

IN HOUSE

Produced in-house for South Waikato residents by the SWDC Communications Team.

Editorial: Kerry Fabrie, Brooke Sullivan and Lisa Chunder
07 885 0340.

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South Waikato Women Empowerment Takes Centre Stage

The International Women's Day event held in South Waikato was a resounding success, bringing together 150 young women from local high schools to celebrate the stories, failures, hard work and successes of women across various industries.

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global celebration dedicated to recognising the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It also serves as a call to action for accelerating gender equality. Celebrated annually on 8 March, it's a day to honour women's contributions to society.

The theme for International Women's Day 2024 was **Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress**. This theme aimed to challenge stereotypes, prejudices and biases against women in all spheres of life, including the workplace, education, media and beyond.

The event kicked off with inspiring keynote speaker, Lanita Ririnui, where attendees had the privilege of listening to her journey. She highlighted the importance of working hard to stand out above the rest, finding your passion and working towards your big goals as hard as you can.

Following the first keynote, the girls engaged in intimate discussions with talented women ranging from sportswomen to business people and social change agents, offering insights into their careers, life experiences and invaluable teachings learned along the way. This personalised interaction provided the young women with firsthand knowledge and mentorship, empowering them to navigate their own paths with confidence.

Next Anna Mowbray touched hearts as she reflected on her upbringing in Tokoroa, having attended the same primary school as some of the young women in attendance. She highlighted the truth about success and privilege which she has come to see isn't about wealth, but the strength of the support network around you. For her, it was her parents who instilled an intrinsic sense of self-confidence, independence and grit. Anna's journey showcased the power of resilience and self-belief, inspiring young women to embrace challenges and strive for greatness.

To conclude the day, students listened to Ultramarathon runner, Lisa Tamati, sharing her wisdom on breaking barriers, stressing the significance of a strong support system and the ability to push past your limits and achieve things you didn't think were possible. Her words resonated with the students, instilling a sense of empowerment and possibility.

Overall, the event was a testament to the strength and solidarity of women, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended. Through shared experiences and invaluable mentorship, the International Women's Day celebration in South Waikato fostered a community of empowered and ambitious young women ready to conquer the world.



Getting the Most Out of Antenno

Antenno is not just another app – it's your direct line to Council and ensures that you receive important updates about things that directly impact you. Here are some top tips to help you get the most out of this powerful tool.

Stay informed: Enable push notifications to receive real-time updates on important news, events and alerts from Council. From road closures to community events, stay in the loop and never miss out on what's happening in your area.

Choose your places: You can choose the places you want to be alerted about, so we're not bothering you with things that don't affect you. This might include your home, workplace or where your kids go to school. It's customised by you!

Report issues: Spot a pothole, tagging or other maintenance issue in your neighborhood? Use Antenno to quickly and easily report it to Council.

Participate in consultations: Have your say on local projects and initiatives by participating in Council processes through consultation links sent via Antenno.

Save places as specific addresses: There's no need to sift through messages to find what's relevant to you. Antenno provides relevant information for places you care about. So, for example, if there's a water outage on your street you will be notified about it. If something comes up that affects the entire district, you'll also receive a notification. Remember to use your full address, ie, not just Baird Road, Tokoroa; use 37 Baird Road, Tokoroa.

You can opt out of a topic for a specific place: As an example, if you save your work address (where you don't want to receive rates reminders) and your home address (where you DO want to receive rates reminders), you can choose to opt out of receiving rates reminders for your work address. Unfortunately, at this time, you can't opt back in to a topic that you have opted out of.

On time notifications: Just be sure to have your WiFi connection or mobile data on to receive notifications. If you are somewhere without WiFi and don't have your mobile data on, you won't receive new posts until you're connected again.

Choose a nickname: If you have multiple places saved, give each place a nickname. For example - you may add three addresses - Home, Work, Rental Property. Each notification shows which of your saved places it relates to, by displaying the nickname at the top left. You will find that for a State Highway 1 road closure (a district wide message) all three nicknames appear at the top as this post is relevant to all three places. When you receive a notification, first check your nickname as that will indicate which address(es) the message refers to. This is especially relevant with recycling reminders. We've had a few reports of people receiving reminders "on the wrong day" when it turns out that the reminder was for their work address or rental property, not their home address. You can have as many addresses as you want.

Antenno is designed to empower you to play an active role in your community. By leveraging its features and capabilities, you can stay informed, engaged, and connected like never before. Download Antenno today from the App Store or Google Play and start making a difference in your local area.



Council is levelling up our social media game. Hope you have noticed the new, clean and cohesive approach to images and content?



The Arapuni Wastewater Treatment Plant received an upgrade. This was achieved with no disruption to the wastewater services for the community and the team maintained their service levels throughout the works.



Somebody thought it was okay to toss bags of maggot infested rubbish outside the Putāruru Transfer Station recently.

Just in case others are wondering about the opening hours, this facility is open Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 4pm.

The facility in Tokoroa is open Tuesday to Saturday 9am - 4pm, Sunday 9am to 5pm (April to Sep) and 9am to 6pm (Oct to March).



Waikato Chamber of Commerce coming to South Waikato

The Waikato Chamber of Commerce will soon expand into the South Waikato. Chamber Chief Executive Don Good said they made the move due to the increase in businesses settling in the district.

“With many more innovative businesses - especially in the forestry, engineering, home construction, social services and education sectors - establishing themselves in Tokoroa and Putāruru, this has created a demand for better connections with regional, national and global companies.

“We have received a great deal of interest from South Waikato businesses [which] are looking to grow and want better connections with regional, national, and global companies.

“In collaboration with the South Waikato Investment Fund Trust, our intention is to initiate, advocacy and lobbying, networking events, social media activity and connections with businesses in the wider Waikato region.”

South Waikato Investment Fund Trust Chief Executive Amanda Hema said SWIFT and the Chamber would complement each other.

“SWIFT focuses more on local capability development, and the Chamber provides regional, national and international connections.”

To mark the launch, the Chamber, together with SWIFT and Wintec, Toi Ohomai hosted an event in the district. Three Waikato business leaders - David Hallett, co-founder of Hamilton software business Company-X, Tjay Asiata, chief executive of Hamilton-based human resources company LM4 Group, and Gareth van der Heyden, chief executive of poultry business Better Eggs, talked about their business journeys.

The South Waikato has seen significant growth in recent years and has drawn in several big projects, including the Ofi dairy factory, the Putāruru Country Estate retirement village development and the South Waikato Trades Training Centre Pūkenga Rau.

“One of South Waikato District Council’s key strategic goals is to improve the local economy,” said Mayor Gary Petley. “I hope our local business leaders connect with the Chamber to take advantage of the support they can offer through their membership programme.”

Pictured right: David Hallett and Gareth van der Heyden



Pictured above: Rob Finlayson – Waikato Chamber of Commerce, David Hallett – Co-founder / Director of Company X, Gareth van der Heyden – CEO of Better Eggs, Amanda Hema – CE of South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT), Huia Haeata – Executive Director of Te Pūkenga and Tjay Asiata – Group Chief Executive of LM4 Group.

Long Term Plan - coming soon...

Council will soon be consulting with its community on its Long Term Plan 2024-25.

Normally, Council adopts its LTP by 30 June, but we are going to adopt a little later this time in mid-July. This is due to the complexities with Government changes to legislation on the Three Waters Reform. Councils have been given a three-month extension to adopt the LTP. We anticipate that consultation will kick off in early May through to early June.

At the time of writing, staff and Councillors were still crunching the final numbers on what we need to do and how much we can spend.

But we do know a few things.

Like many councils, SWDC is facing a raft of issues like effective delivery of drinking water, dealing with wastewater and draining stormwater (three waters), maintaining aging infrastructure, significant cost escalations and labour shortages.

We know it’s hard to talk about the investment that our district needs for the future when the cost of living now is front of everyone’s mind.

To make us financially sustainable we have needed to make some tough calls. We started this last year with a higher than previous rates revenue increase, which gave us breathing space to do a full activity and service review. And thank goodness we did because it has put us in a much better position than many other councils.

We have talked before about our under-investment in existing infrastructure. We need to turn that around and you will see through the draft LTP that we will be prioritising three waters renewals and infrastructure.

Council has kept its debt on the low side over the past years. We’ve shifted our thinking on this. But we should only borrow for the right reasons. Our debt will – and must grow, over the coming decade so that we can invest in our infrastructure that will be available for generations to come (intergenerational equity) and deliver services at a standard our community expects. Unfortunately, this significant investment in the hard-core infrastructure through debt funding means there will be less debt funding available for other projects in order to remain financially responsible.

Despite the challenges that face us, the South Waikato is growing, and we must forge ahead to respond to growth. If we don’t invest in our towns, infrastructure and people, our District will go backwards.

We want to see our community thrive. This means creating a robust economy, getting our people into employment (or education), creating more housing opportunities, leaving a sustainable environment for our children and grandchildren and providing opportunity for all to benefit from the district. It’s all about striking the right balance.

In the meantime, we are currently open for consultation on our Fees and Charges and key policies. This information is available on our website and summarised on the next four pages of In Touch. We welcome your submissions.

FEES & CHARGES

RELATED TO THE LONG TERM PLAN



CURRENTLY CONSULTING
see pages 6, 7 and 8

Council conducts a full review of its Long Term Plan (LTP) every three years.

Typically, we consult on the LTP and all its components simultaneously. However, this year's LTP consultation has been delayed due to the Three Waters Reform. Initially, Council was required to remove three waters activities from our LTP planning, but now we need to put these activities back on our books.

Several of our Fees and Charges need adopting earlier than what we can now achieve with the full LTP, so we're splitting this component out and consulting now. In addition, several of our policies are ready for consultation, so we're including those now too.

The remaining portions of the LTP – activities, plans, budgets and key areas, will be out for consultation in the coming months.

A GENERAL SHIFT

Most Council services are funded by a combination of fees and charges (when individuals benefit from the particular service) and rates.

We propose several general shifts in our approach to Fees and Charges.

1. The Fees and Charges set three years ago in our previous LTP assumed a 2% inflation increase. We all know that inflation is a lot more than that now! So, we've had to increase several fees to keep pace with today's more challenging economic environment.
2. We are moving towards recovering costs from those who directly benefit from the service (ie, our Fees and Charges) where it is reasonable to do so. Some of our activities like libraries, pools and other leisure offerings will always require significant rate input. Council needs to balance what is funded by rates and what is funded by those who benefit individually from the service.
3. Finally, depreciation must be factored into the charge so that facilities especially can be renewed and replaced.

Several fees are increasing by between 10% and 15%, with some fees lower and/or higher than this. We haven't detailed all the proposed fees in the Consultation Document or here on the next few pages of In Touch, but you can give feedback on any fee – just go to the full document.

Scan the code alongside to visit the Consultation page on our website. You will find an online submission form and Consultation Document and all other supporting documents:

- Fees & Charges (full document)
- Rates Postponement Policy
- Rates Remission Policy
- Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy
- Treasury Management Policy
- Significance and Engagement Policy
- Revenue and Finance Policy.



TIMELINE

Wednesday 3 April

CONSULTATION OPENS



Friday 3 May

CONSULTATION CLOSES



Wednesday 15 May

HEARINGS & DELIBERATIONS



Wednesday 29 May

ADOPTION

FEES AND CHARGES - PROPOSED CHANGES

For all the Fees and Charges, visit the Consultation page on our website at www.southwaikato.govt.nz or scan the code below.



LAND INFORMATION MEMORANDUM (LIM)

There has been a moderate increase in fees for LIMs, along with a simplification of fees.

We are discouraging urgent LIMs, which have a three-day turnaround and encourage people to use the standard LIM service (10-day turnaround).

We also used to have different fees for vacant sites versus built sites. We have standardised this into one fee that covers both.

We have also introduced a cancellation fee.

TOKOROA AIRFIELD

We are proposing a new annual landing fee for multiple user/club aircraft and proposing to increase several fees to move towards recovering costs through those who use the facility rather than ratepayers because it is reasonable to do so.

Survey results tell us that most residents want us to explore other options for the airfield and surrounding land. Work is underway for future consideration by Council and the community.

CEMETERIES

Council appreciates that this is a sensitive activity.

Several fees in this area are proposed to increase substantially.

Council's contractor prices have increased in line with these actual costs. Council has only two funding streams to pay for the cemetery service - rates and/or fees. Council's proposal does not burden all ratepayers with the additional cost, but rather increases the fees that are paid by individuals. We know this is an unwelcome increase but we are trying to keep rates as low as possible by shifting costs to those who benefit from the service, where we can and where it is reasonable to do so.

Our proposed fees are comparable with, and in many cases lower than, our neighbouring councils.

Increases are below:

Fee	Current	Proposed (2024-15)
Right of burial (reserve plot) - adult	\$605	\$870
Right of burial (reserve plot) - child under 12	\$405	\$670
Right of burial (reserve plot) - ashes	\$160	\$425
Adult interment (burial)	\$675	\$1,640
Child under 12 interment (burial)	\$440	\$615
Ashes interment (burial)	\$150	\$275
Additional charge for Saturday, Sunday & public holidays (adult & child)	\$240	\$1,090
Disinterment (exhumation)	\$675	\$3,280
Re-interment (reburial)	\$675	\$1,650

SWIMMING POOLS

Swimming pools is an activity of Council that will likely stay mostly rate-funded. Like libraries and other community facilities, swimming pools contribute significantly to the social fabric of our community and are unlikely to ever be self-supporting. However, we do need to be mindful of the balance between user fees and rates. We are proposing a general increase across all the fees in this space, many less than 5%, but there are some upwards of 10%.

We are proposing higher increases in the hireage space:

- School usage/hire (per hour) – from \$48 to \$60, an increase of 25%.
- Community room parties/functions up to three hours – from \$30 to \$40, an increase of 33%

Again, these proposed increases are to have users contribute towards costs where it is reasonable.

LIBRARY

Library charges are increasing by a small amount to align with the shift to user pays. The good news is that we are removing the fee for overdue books, so no more fines!



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Financial contributions apply across the district except for the Putāruru township which operates under Development Contributions. The formula for charging Financial Contributions sits in the District Plan. As part of its Long Term Plan, Council is reviewing its Development Contributions Policy and this will be ready for consultation alongside the full LTP.

Council is still offering discounted fees in this space to ensure we continue to encourage development and growth.

Only the car parking fee is increasing, the remaining five - roading, reserves, stormwater, water and wastewater, are decreasing to align with the Development Contributions.

By doing this, developers are not disadvantaged based on where they are developing.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

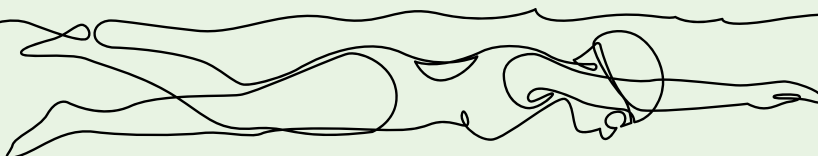
There is around a 10% increase in resource consent fees across the fee structure. This is in line with recovering costs through user fees where it is reasonable to do so.

WATER SUPPLY

Metered charges are increasing to ensure appropriate cost recovery for metered users on Council's water supply network.

Over the past years the targeted rate for water supply has increased to keep pace with the cost of providing a safe, healthy and compliant water supply service. Metered charges have not increased by the same amount.

This proposed increase is to restore the equilibrium across all users of the network making it fairer for everyone.



DOG CONTROL & REGISTRATION

Dog registration fees are not increasing substantially, while impound and seizure fees have all increased by 10% or more.

The fees that usually attract the most interest from our dog owners are:

Fee	Current	Proposed (2024-25)
Standard urban	\$176	\$190
Standard rural	\$77	\$85
Selected Owner (urban only)	\$88	\$90

The Selected Owner fee has traditionally been half of the standard urban fee but is now proposed to be less than half of the standard fee.

This is a great reason to enquire about selected dog ownership and get a property inspection booked in. Call Council on 07 885 0340.



PENSIONER HOUSING

Rents for Pensioner Housing are currently around 55% of market rates. Under our Revenue and Finance Policy this activity is primarily funded by rentals (ie, those who benefit from the service). The cost of servicing and maintaining the Pensioner Housing outweighs the rental income we receive from tenants.

For the 2024-25 year we propose to increase rentals to within 15% of market rates. These increases are reflected below.

Fee	Current	Proposed (2024-25)
1-bedroom	\$155	\$225
2-bedroom	\$195	\$305

Rent levels must be set to recover Council's full cost of providing housing to the occupiers. This includes operations, repairs, maintenance and depreciation.

We are also wanting feedback on a possible discount for single people living in two-bedroom units.

SOLID WASTE

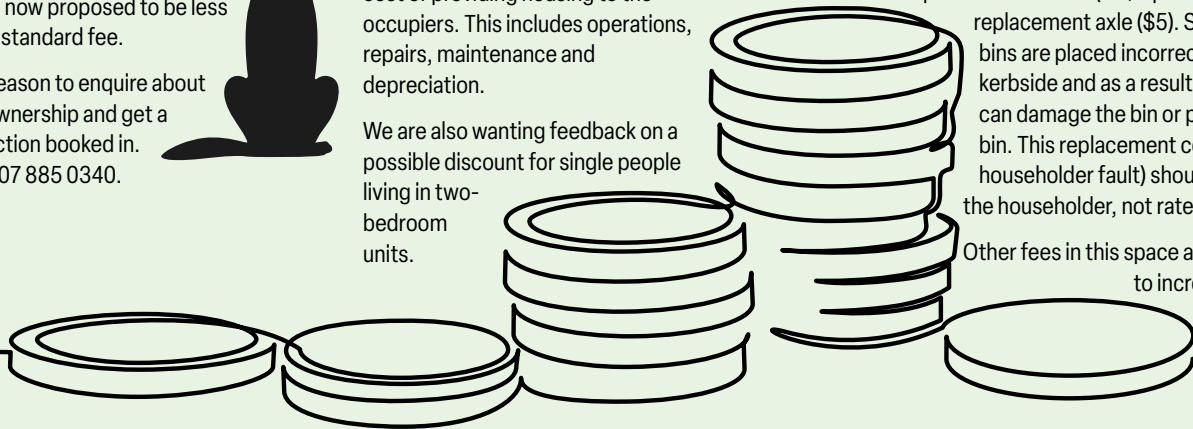
Solid waste disposal fees are proposed to change:

- An increase in the standard per tonne fee from \$340 to \$380. The driver for this is that the Government waste levy has increased, and we need to pass on that increase. On the plus side, Council gets waste levy funding back for recycling and waste management initiatives for the community.
- We are increasing our minimum fee from \$5 to \$10. This increase aligns with the actual cost of managing waste and ensuring that those who use the service pay for the service, as opposed to placing the burden on ratepayers.
- The minimum greenwaste fee retained at \$5.

Replacement wheelie bins are both incurring a \$5 increase. We have also introduced some new charges regarding replacement bin lids (at \$15), replacement wheels (at \$5 per wheel) and

replacement axle (\$5). Sometimes bins are placed incorrectly at the kerbside and as a result the truck can damage the bin or parts of the bin. This replacement cost (when it is householder fault) should be borne by the householder, not ratepayer.

Other fees in this space are proposed to increase by a small amount.



POLICIES - PROPOSED CHANGES

REVENUE & FINANCE POLICY - KEY CHANGES

Removing set percentages - previously, for example the emergency management function would be 100% funded by rates and libraries 92% from rates and 8% from users etc. We have removed all specific percentages and replaced with **primary source** and **secondary source** for flexibility.

Operations funded by rates alone - as far as possible operations will not be debt funded. Readers may recall the Annual Plan last year where Council raised that we have historically funded operations in an unsustainable manner. This change addresses this.

We have improved how projects are identified, prioritised and progressed. Only projects that align with our core services will be prioritised and funding options investigated. Rates funding will be a last resort after grants, user charges, debt and depreciation are considered.

Debt funding will only be used for new assets or intergenerational assets, not operations.

Ward rates will be removed, and the cost put on the general rate. This causes minimal impact for ratepayers and is primarily an administrative saving, so more effective and efficient.

Hall rates will be removed, and the cost put on the general rate. Again, the impact is minimal for ratepayers. This change also supports Council's goal to better streamline the number of facilities.

Recycling drop off zones - this targeted rate will be removed and included in the general rate. This charge is not for household collection service, it is for the management and maintenance of the recycling drop off zones.

Additional unit charge has been removed and replaced with a second (third, and subsequent) Uniform Annual General Charge (UAGC). There will be no change in the amount charged, it's just a terminology tidy-up. This only affects properties with additional dwellings.

SIGNIFICANCE & ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The Significance and Engagement Policy provides guidance on how and when Council engages with its community on significant issues, proposals, assets, decisions and activities.

The proposed Policy allows Council to respond to the current challenging economic environment.

Council needs to balance the time it spends on consulting with its community with getting on with the work of delivering our services.

Council can also initiate consultation for projects that don't necessarily meet the Policy guidance.

OTHER POLICIES - MINOR CHANGES

We have made minor changes to four other policies:

- Remission and Postponement of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy
- Treasury Management Policy
- Rates Postponement Policy
- Rates Remission Policy.

Give your feedback for consultation

Council's consultation process is public, and your comments will be available for public inspection. Your submission won't be returned to you. If you require a copy, please make one before submitting.

Your feedback is very welcome on any of the Fees & Charges and/or Policies.

All supporting documents are available online at www.southwaikato.govt.nz. Click on Consultation.

Or scan the code alongside.



DO IT ONLINE

You will also see the full Fees and Charges document and the draft Policies reflected in this Consultation Document.

FILL OUT & RETURN THE FORM BELOW

You may include additional sheets of paper.

ANSWER THESE

QUESTION 1

Do you have any comments about any of our proposed Fees & Charges?

Please note the title of the Fee. You may provide feedback on any number of our proposed fees.

QUESTION 2

Do you have any comments about any of our proposed Policies?

Please note the title of the Policy. You may provide feedback on any of the proposed Policies.

ANSWER 1

ANSWER 2

SUBMISSION FORM DETAILS

By hand: drop your submission in to the Council offices in Putāruru or Tokoroa or to the Dog (I-Site) in Tirau

By mail: Freepost Authority Number 201, Fees & Charges 2024-25, South Waikato District Council, Torphin Crescent, Tokoroa, 3420

By email: info@southwaikato.govt.nz. Please write Fees & Charges 2024-25 in the subject bar.

Online: www.southwaikato.govt.nz/our-council/consultation

CONSULTATION CLOSING FRIDAY 3 MAY 2024

Heartwarming Holiday Spirit Sweeps South Waikato



We bring you a story of compassion and community spirit that unfolded just before the Christmas holidays, capturing the hearts of locals and highlighting the impact of collective effort. Holly Allan and daughter Sophia, took the initiative to spread holiday cheer by focusing their efforts on the wellbeing of the less fortunate furry residents of their community.

The Allan family organised a raffle that quickly became the talk of the town, not just for the prizes up for grabs, but for the noble cause it supported. All proceeds from the raffle were dedicated to the local Animal Shelter, a haven for stray and abandoned animals waiting for a second chance at life.

Thanks to overwhelming support from the community the Animal Shelter has improved the living conditions and happiness of their animals. The funds purchased clam shell pools, providing a much-needed respite for the dogs from the scorching summer heat. Small containers were filled with doggy ice blocks, a treat to cool down during the hot days. The shelter also received an array of toys, treats, collars, harnesses and essential items such as worm and flea treatments and doggy shampoos.

A special mention goes to Amanda Viviers, whose contributions and kindness played a significant role in the initiative's success. The generosity of Holly, Sophia, Amanda and all those who participated in the raffle demonstrates the profound impact of community spirit and the difference it can make in the lives of animals in need.

The pools were a huge hit with the pups throughout the summer and did a fantastic job of keeping them cool during those soaring temperatures. The improvements have not only provided physical comfort to the animals but have also brought about a noticeable uplift in their spirits, making them more sociable and adoptable.

This story serves as a reminder of the impact of generosity and the importance of looking after all members of the community, both human and animal.

As the South Waikato community transitions into the colder seasons, it's important to remember the on-going needs of our furry friends. While the warmer months saw the pups enjoying their new pools and toys, the chillier weather ahead calls for extra warmth and comfort. If you're thinking about throwing out your old blankets, instead of discarding them, consider donating them to the South Waikato Animal Shelter.



A RISING TIDE OF ABANDONMENT

In recent months, our community has been facing a deeply troubling issue—the horrific increase in the dumping of animals, especially cats and dogs. This alarming trend not only highlights a growing problem but also calls for an immediate response from pet owners and the community at large.

The decision to bring a pet into your home should never be taken lightly. Animals require a significant commitment of time, resources, money and emotional investment. Prospective pet owners must consider their lifestyle, financial stability and their long-term ability to care for an animal. Unfortunately, the lack of foresight in these considerations contributes to the current crisis.

When faced with the realisation that they cannot handle the responsibility, some pet owners opt for the cruel and irresponsible action of abandoning their pets. This not only puts the animals in grave danger but also strains local animal welfare organisations and shelters.

If you find yourself unable to care for your dog, please do not resort to dumping. Contact Animal Control at 07 885 0340. They are committed to assisting pet owners in distress and will do their utmost to help rehome dogs in need. For cats, reaching out to the SPCA or PAWS is the responsible course of action. These organisations are equipped to provide the necessary care and find new homes for these animals.

An essential step in preventing the overpopulation of pets and, by extension, the abandonment issue, is spaying or neutering your pets. This simple medical procedure not only prevents unwanted litters but also contributes to the health and longevity of your pets. It is a crucial part of responsible pet ownership and a practice that can significantly reduce the number of animals that end up homeless or in shelters.

The surge in pet dumping is a call to action for all of us. It is a reminder of the importance of responsible pet ownership and the need for community support in addressing and preventing this issue. By considering the long-term commitments before adopting a pet, making informed decisions about our ability to care for them and knowing where to turn for help, we can make a difference. Let us come together to ensure that all pets in our community live in safe, loving homes.

To report any abandoned animals, kindly reach out to the following numbers:

For dogs, please call South Waikato Animal Control at 07 885 0340.

For cats, reach out to SPCA Rotorua at 07 349 2755 or SPCA Taupo at 07 378 4396.

World Water Day Essay Competition

Tokoroa High School has won Council's very first World Water Day Essay competition! In March, a call was made to all local high schools for their senior students to participate in this debut competition.

The theme for World Water Day 2024 was 'Water for Peace'. Twelve students from Tokoroa High School participated in the competition. Their essays showcased remarkable creativity and a thorough understanding of the importance of fresh water in our lives.

Their outstanding mahi was celebrated at a special prizegiving function at the Council Chamber on World Water Day, Friday 22 March. The two first place winners received a \$250 gift card sponsored by Camex Civil and Tirau Earthmovers. The two second place winners each received a \$100 gift card sponsored by Stewart Contracting. Additionally, the school received sporting equipment sponsored by Civtec and stationery sponsored by Filtec Water. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our contractors for their generous support. "Council will be looking at generating more interest from schools and communities to celebrate World Water Day in the future," says Sheshant Kumar, Council's Three Waters Manager.

See below for an extract from the Year 11 winning essay. Enjoy!

“Tiaki mai i ahau, maku ano koe e tiaki.”
“If you look after me, then I will look after you.”

The father of the sea, Tangaroa, swims amongst us as we pollute his kingdom. Eight million pieces of plastic float alongside his sea creatures. We refuse to acknowledge just how much we are slowly killing ourselves and our future generations. One piece of rubbish at a time. Is it really that exhausting to hold your litter for a few minutes longer? Is it really that exhausting to walk a few more metres to get to a bin? What has made you so lazy that you must add to the statistic? Look into the eyes of the wai the next time you go to swim, consume or bathe. Look in the eyes and apologise!



The Putāruru Food and Water Festival on Saturday 24 February was held under sunny, clear skies with what seemed to be half of Putāruru visiting. Organised by Pride in Putāruru, the day was a hit with locals and visitors alike.

Several Council staff attended to chat with the community on many and all things Council related. Visitors to our stand had the opportunity to learn more about our library programmes, water supply, emergency management, Antenna and recycling.

The library's fishing swimming pool was thoroughly enjoyed by every child that passed by the stand, and many an adult too. The Guess the Number of Lollies in the Jar competition attracted well over 100 entries. While tamariki eagerly counted the number of lollies (ably assisted by Council's Emergency Manager Martin Barratt, who advised them it was more than one but less than 1,000... helpful!) staff took the opportunity to talk to parents and adults about other areas of Council.

The engagement from the community was positive with some great questions and good conversation.



Tirau Domain brings it home at the 2023 Waikato Sport and Active Recreation Awards!



We're thrilled to announce that Tirau Domain has taken home first place in the 'Outstanding Active Space Initiative' category at the 2023 Waikato Sport and Active Recreation Awards! This is a huge win not only for the Council but the entire community.



The Tirau Domain is the perfect spot for whānau, offering a friendly environment with something for everyone. Whether you cycle, scooter or skateboard, the pump track is a must-visit.

The walkway is free to access and even our four-legged friends are welcome on leashes in the Upper Domain area, with a dedicated dog exercise area in the Lower Domain – talk about paws-itively awesome! So gather your whānau, grab your gear and come enjoy all that Tirau Domain has to offer.



NEWS FROM THE PLAZA



Events happening in May - July

- Te Tupua The Goblin - Arts on Tour NZ - Monday, 6 May at 6pm.
An expertly crafted solo performance, delivered by a veteran of the New Zealand stage. John Davies inhabits nine characters, bringing to life an extraordinary corner of our history. A Scottish lad of ten is driven into slavery aboard His Majesty's ships, circa 1800. After 15 years at sea, he is cast onto the shoreline of Aotearoa. Tickets \$15.



- SWPICS vaccination pop up clinic - Thursday, 16 May from 2pm to 4pm.
- Rangiuira Fundraising Quiz Night - Friday 17 May.
- Sunday movie: To be confirmed - 19 May at 2pm. Tickets \$10.
- SWPICS vaccination pop up clinic - Thursday 20 June from 2pm to 4pm.
- Pride in Putāruru Farmers Welcome BBQ - Friday 21 June.
- Pride in Putāruru Matariki movie - Friday 28 June at 10am.
- Sunday Movie: to be confirmed - 30 June at 2pm - Tickets \$10.

Sign up to The Plaza's monthly newsletter through their website www.plaza.org.nz to keep up to date on their events.

CONTACT THE PLAZA

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Getting Ready for Winter

With winter fast approaching it's time to start thinking about getting your vehicle ready for the colder weather.

Here are a few things you can do to reduce your chances of a breakdown over winter.

Check your battery

During the winter months your battery will work extra hard with cold starts and the constant use of your car's heater, lights and A/C which all add extra strain. If your car is already having problems, get it checked now. As a backup ensure you have a pair of jumper cables in your boot or even an emergency jump pack.

Check the condition of your tyres

Your vehicles tyres are the only contact you have with the road. Ensure your tyres have at least the legal minimum of 1.5 depth of tread (more is better) and are inflated to the correct pressure. Don't forget to also check the spare tyre.

Clean and check your lights

Check that all your lights, indicators and rear reflectors are clean. Look for blown bulbs or cracked lenses. Also remember to check your lights on full beam as well as any fog lights that may be fitted. Driving with your lights on during the day makes you much more visible in wet and foggy weather.

Wash your windscreen and wipers

Give your windscreen a thorough clean, both inside and out. Also remember to top up your windscreen washer fluid. Check your wiper blades by running your finger down checking for nicks and tears. Check for any chips in the windscreen as these can expand in the cold weather. Remember it's not a good idea to put hot water on a frozen windscreen as it might crack.

Prepare a winter breakdown kit

Ensure it includes a torch, blanket, hi-visibility vest, scraper and snacks. Always ensure your phone is fully charged before leaving on your journey, remember your vehicle battery may go flat leaving you to spend the night in your vehicle.



ANOTHER VISIT FROM THE GLENBROOK TRAIN - WELCOME MATAMATA



The Glenbrook train made yet another visit to Tokoroa on Saturday 17 February.

The passengers travelled from Matamata to Tokoroa where they alighted and spent a couple of hours browsing markets, enjoying lunch and wandering around our CBD.

The over one hundred passengers were greeted by the awesome beat of our wonderful Island Drums. This made for a unique glimpse into a local culture that is close to our hearts here in the South Waikato.

Virtually every visitor stopped and listened with a few game individuals giving island dancing a go.



OUR NITRATES ARE WITHIN LEVELS

A recent media statement from Greenpeace sparked a bit of concern in our community, especially from Tokoroa residents.

Greenpeace issued a statement citing that Tokoroa's water contained nitrates, after testing water provided by individuals.

This story led to phone calls from concerned locals and from newspaper reporters.

We want to assure our community:

1. Nitrates in the Tokoroa water supply system are well under the maximum levels for Nitrate (NO₃-N) which is 11.3mg/L.
2. Council has been sampling the Tokoroa town water supply since 2007 consistently, all sample results have come back around 4mg/L which is compliant and meets the requirements of the Water Services Regulations.
3. Council supplied drinking water across its water supply network is within regulation, according to samples taken by our qualified staff and tested at accredited laboratories.

Special note: Council has no specifics regarding the Greenpeace testing – where and how the samples were taken, if they were collected from tap or source or from private water supplies, nor the method that Greenpeace used to test.

READ IN TOUCH? PROVE IT...

... and be in to win a lucky dip \$50 supermarket voucher.

We will be running this competition every issue. The answers to the five questions below are in this issue – April 2024. You have to get them all correct to be in the draw.

Text your answers and your name to 027 287 5980 or private message our Facebook page by 30 April 2024.

1. How much did the first place winner/s receive in Council's World Water Day Competition?
2. Who won Council's Top Dog competition?
3. Which policy provides guidance on how and when Council engages with its community on significant issues and proposals?
4. What was the theme for International Women's Day 2024?
5. What is the proposed dog registration fee for Selected Owner?

Congratulations to Hilary of Tokoroa who was drawn as the lucky winner for the February 2024 In Touch competition. Thank you to all those who entered. Try again this issue!

The correct answers were:

1. Vanessa Barkley, 2. no, 3. more than 22, 4. Council (local) and Waka Kotahi (state highways), 5. yes



Antenno is a mobile phone app that is FREE for users to download from Google Play or the App Store. Install the app. Input your specific address(es) – home, work, play, and we send you messages relevant to your address. Users can also use the app to report issues or ideas to us.



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