

MAYORAL COLUMN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

I am not against change and I am all for reviews but I am struggling with the current number of Central Government driven reforms all happening at the same time.

The Three Waters is a major and has been going on for a while but add to that the Resource Management Act Reform, health restructure and now the Local Government Reform. I really do have to question how Central Government can expect to truly hear from its communities in such a noisy space. If the health restructure and disbandment of District Health Boards is an indicator, then I have major concerns for the future of Local Government and local communities.



Mayor Craig Little

A new briefing paper from the Department of Internal Affairs to Minister of Local Government Nanaia Mahuta suggested the way the country's councils are funded and operate needs an overhaul, with outdated legislation among a long list of problems.

I agree there are issues, with the most significant being a lack of Central Government funding. Councils simply cannot afford to rely on rates as a major source of revenue.

A small Council is required to meet all the same legislative requirements as a larger city council, but we have so many less resources to deliver the functions.

Central Government is continually changing legislation and requirements and it is incredibly difficult for Local Government to deliver on the changes because the expectations always fall short of additional funding.

For the past century, while the Central Government spending trajectory has continually gone up, Central Government funding to Local Government has remained the same, literally flatlined.

The way Councils are currently forced to operate is outdated and change is necessary. However, it is also important a rational and practical approach is used, and that this reform doesn't just get pushed through along with all the other reviews that are currently occurring.

I am aware of the additional legislative costs our ratepayers currently have to pay to meet Central Government requirements. But I am more concerned how our communities will be impacted if localisation is taken away from us.

It would be great to see some transparency around what Central Government's intentions are and to know that there is no pre-determination.

I will also be seeking clarification from our local MP Stuart Nash.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Council's 2021-31 Long-Term Plan consultation period is now open and runs until the end of May. This is your chance to have your say and tell us what you think.

Council's Long-Term Plan describes activities and the community outcomes Council hopes to achieve over the next 10 years.

We often hear very strong opinions about how Council is operating. This is your chance to tell us where you think we should be spending.

We are a small Council and operate a complex business delivering a diverse range of 23 different activities. We do have scalability challenges and have developed a financial strategy that sets the Council's direction of travel for the next 10 years.

The Long-Term Plan Consultation Document proposes an average rate increase of 10% for the first year of the plan (2021/22) followed by three years of average increases of around 8%. The average rates increase over the 10 years of the plan is 5.6%.

The next four years will be hard but there is light at the end of the tunnel.

This proposal focusses on delivering a similar level of service to what is presently delivered as well as servicing debt and replenishing reserves. It is about looking after our community today, and in the future.

To achieve financial sustainability, we need to be rating to recover the ever-increasing costs we are facing.

We really do encourage you to have your say on what matters to you so you can be a part of planning for Wairoa's future. You may have ideas that we haven't thought of and we welcome your input.

Consultation will run during the month of May and will include the following community sessions:

- Monday 10th May, 10am - 2pm, The Craft Shop, Tuai**
- Wednesday 12th May, 10am - 2pm, Osler's Bakery, Wairoa**
- Monday 17th May, 10am - 2pm, Nuhaka Shop, Nuhaka**
- Monday 17th May, 5:30pm - 7:30pm, Community meeting, War Memorial Hall, Wairoa**
- Wednesday 19th May, 10am - 2pm, BJ's Dairy, Frasertown**
- Thursday 20th May, 10am - 2pm, Public Rest Area SH2, Raupunga**
- Friday 21st May, 10am - 2pm, Sunset Point, Mahia**

Submissions close on Tuesday, 1 June 2021 at 4.30pm.

To view the consultation document online head to www.consultations.nz/wdc. Online submissions can be made by emailing feedback@wairodc.govt.nz. People can pick up a copy of the Consultation Document and feedback booklet from the Council offices on Queen Street or write us a letter and send us your thoughts to P O Box 54, Wairoa.

COVID-19 VACCINATION UPDATE

Many of Wairoa's front line health workers have now been vaccinated against COVID-19.

The vaccines are free and voluntary for everyone in New Zealand aged 16 and over.

The Government has assured us there will be enough of the Pfizer vaccine for everyone to get the two doses they need to be protected.

The next vaccine stage is for people most at risk of getting seriously sick or dying if they get the virus. This includes people aged over 65, those who have a relevant underlying health condition, disabled people and those in a custodial setting.

From July the Government expects to begin vaccinating everyone else.

I am looking forward to everyone having the opportunity to be vaccinated and life getting back to some sense of post-COVID normality.

A TASTE OF WAIROA

Tickets are now on sale for the Taste of Wairoa event.



Next month's Taste of Wairoa food and wine event will serve up a range of tastebud tantalisers. Pictured are two of the judging panel, Wairoa District Councillor and Economic Development Committee chair Denise Eaglesome-Karekate and wine sommelier Kenny Tahuri, who had a tough job selecting the winning dishes.

The Wairoa District Council and Hawke's Bay Tourism have paired up to bring a five-course dining experience to Wairoa as part of the Hawke's Bay Food and Wine Classic (FAWC) event.

The degustation menu will showcase local produce and be paired with Hawke's Bay beverages. A Taste of Wairoa promises to be a great event while also giving the local community a chance to showcase their own unique kai and secret whānau recipes.

A Taste of Wairoa will take place on the afternoon of June 26, at the Gaiety Theatre and as well as fine food and beverages will feature local entertainment.

Get your tickets now on Event Finder and search Taste of Wairoa.

WAIROA BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT

Hosted by the Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce, Wairoa District Council and Quality Roading Services

Join us at this complimentary event for drinks, nibbles and networking at the Gaiety Theatre on Tuesday, May 18 from 5.30-7pm.

Please register your interest at www.hawkesbaychamber.co.nz/events-training/events/business-networking-event-wairoa or email courtney@wairoadc.govt.nz

MEET THE MAYOR

If you would like to have a meeting with the Mayor, call the council offices on 06 838 7309 to arrange a meeting time. He is available to meet with people on Wednesdays.



CONTACT US

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