



MAYORAL COLUMN

HAPPY NEW YEAR

I sincerely wish you all the very best for a healthy, happy and prosperous 2023.

I hope you have all enjoyed a great holiday break, and that you are refreshed and ready to take on a new year.

It is interesting to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the past few years, particularly as Council positions itself for the future. A major challenge is around the uncertainty of the Three Waters Reform. While change is being pushed through by this government, we will have an election this year and other parties are saying they will repeal the reform and its legislation. This leaves a lot of unknowns moving forward.

Part of the Council's planning comes in the form of the Annual Plan for the 2023/24 year. Annual Plans are produced for the years between long-term plans and give Councils the opportunity to refresh information and budgets for the coming year and include the setting of rates. Council has some big decisions to make, particularly considering the price escalations that have affected us all.

The 2023/24 Annual Plan will correspond to Year 3 of the Long-term Plan 2021-31 (LTP). Year 3 of the LTP forecast overall rates increase of 7.8%. Of this less than 3% is related to Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on published treasury estimates. However, as we are all aware, general annual inflation in 2022 was 7.2%, and infrastructure-related activities are showing 12% - 15% increases. Part of our planning will need to consider reprioritisation of undertakings and

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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projects, adjustments to service levels and alternative funding approaches.

An example of this is our district roading network. While the Wairoa District Council 'owns' and maintains the Wairoa roading network on behalf of our community, these roads are part of the bigger picture of connectivity throughout New Zealand. Wairoa District Council receives an emergency works Funding Assistance Rate (FAR) of 95% but had applied for 100% bespoke funding to repair the hundreds of slips and dropouts which occurred across Wairoa's roading network during the severe weather events in March and April last year.

While the Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency Board had confirmed the 95% funding, which equates to around \$26 million, in a letter just before Christmas from Board chairman Sir Brian Roche, he said the Board was not in a position to consider a FAR of 100%. This leaves Council 5% short on the required funding which equates to around \$1.4 million.

Wairoa's 95% emergency works FAR is in recognition of our vast geographical area and challenges, our small rating base, our deprivation and lack of ability to pay. We remain appreciative of the 95% funding commitment, but for a small Council like ours to find that additional 5% is almost impossible. Without additional funding, our options are, significant rate increases, borrowing more money or cutting the roading budget and none of these options are sustainable or what we want.

We will be going back to Waka Kotahi to see if there is any room for movement, even if it is not the full 5%, and, depending on how further discussions go, as a Council, we will need to make decisions on how we are going to manage this situation as we move forward.

Whilst we acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of the previous coalition Government and the current Labour Government, we do need an improved targeted funding system that matches centralised requirements with localised delivery. My hope is that the outcome of the current Local Government Reform highlights the financial divide between local and central government and provides methods to lessen this financial gap with increased targeted funding for local authorities. Ideally, Central Government and Local Government should be working in partnership for all New Zealanders, and I hope we are able to achieve that.

Additional planning will be needed around the 3 Waters Reform Better Off Funding package and the outcomes of the Council's review of its Solid Waste Service. In particular, increasing carbon prices and more stringent regulations have significantly impacted operating expenses, and as a minimum, gate fees will need to be reviewed for the upcoming Annual Plan. At the same time, opportunities to participate in the Waste Minimisation Fund are being explored and these may require co-funding.

All in all, 2023 is already shaping up to be

an interesting year and we will keep you all advised of developments.

IT'S SHOWTIME

The Wairoa A and P Show gets underway tomorrow and Saturday, and after the show reluctantly being cancelled last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, I know everyone is looking forward to its return. Tomorrow (Friday) gates open from midday with dog trials, equestrian events, home industries and trade food sites happening throughout the afternoon plus junior stock judging, live music, rides, local rodeo and speed shearing later in the afternoon. Saturday is the main show day starting from 8.30am with all the favourites from Friday, plus the Rural Ironman, Scotch Thistle competition, dog trials, wool room, sheep section, fat lamb competition, shearing as well as rides, bouncy castles, a children's zoo and play area, mini jeeps, bubble soccer and Lulu the Clown plus loads more.

The Wairoa District Council is proud to be a major sponsor of the show and we join a long and loyal list of local businesses and supporters and volunteers who ensure our show goes on.

This year, the Council will also have a presence at the show where we look forward to catching up with the community.

Thank you to everyone for all your hard work. I will be on car parking duty so look forward to seeing you at the showgrounds.

WET SUMMER

The Hawke's Bay Regional Council's rainfall monitoring figures show the last six months have been the wettest since records began. December was our fifth consecutive month of above-normal rainfall for the region and totals are already above normal for January, making it the sixth consecutive month.

The 2022 annual rainfall total hit a new record at 24 of 43 of the regional council's rainfall monitoring sites. Since July 2022, rainfall accumulations are the highest on record for 35 of the 43 monitoring sites.

Our district was lucky to escape the severe damage of last week's Cyclone Hale, and our thoughts are with our Tairāwhiti neighbours who are in clean-up mode from the extensive damage caused by the cyclone.

The abnormal weather has disrupted agriculture, horticulture and contracting work and impacted on many other services and processes throughout the district and region.

The weather is an additional challenge for Council's roading maintenance and repairs, and I thank everyone for their patience while we all work around the impacts of the weather conditions.

For more Council information and updates head to our website wairoadc.govt.nz

FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

FINANCE ASSURANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, February 7

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SPORT
NEW ZEALAND
IHI AOTEAROA



SPORT NZ Rural Travel Fund

Applications for financial assistance through the SPORT NZ Rural Travel Fund (Formerly SPARC) are now open.

Approximately \$11,352 is available for distribution to local rural sports clubs and school teams with members aged between 5-19 years who require subsidies to assist with transport expenses to local sporting competitions.

Applicants will need to meet the eligibility criteria of the Rural Travel Fund.

Application forms and further information are available from: Latoya Tipuna, email latoya@wairoadc.govt.nz or call into the Wairoa District Council offices or i-Site or phone 06 838 7309.

For more information please refer:



Applications close
Friday, April 21, 2023

Kitea Tipuna
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER