

town & country matters



June 2011 | Issue 62

From the Mayor, Meng Foon



Tena koutou ki a koutou katao.
This month has been very busy. My councillors and I need to continue helping to grow our region's prosperity. I am pleased we are continuing our work to make us business-ready. We

have zoned our heavy industrial site with all its infrastructure in place, and since the zoning of the light industrial area by Aerodrome Road, we have provided a budget for core services so that area is business-ready.

A number of new stores and businesses have set up and this is great for employment.

Our regional road transport committee will seriously consider the issue of trucks going down residential streets and report back in due course. I know this is of concern.

Council has approved me embarking on efforts to gain world heritage status for the areas involving the Tairāwhiti Navigations story. This is going to take time as we need to talk and get input from many people and organisations. It could take three years but it will be worth it.

We will start our meetings with people on the Waipaoa flood control scheme in the upper areas.

We want to restore The Cenotaph to an enduring respectable memorial. This work will need a community approach as the repairs could have quite a price tag.

Costs are being firmed up for the upgrade of the War Memorial Theatre.

Council is keen to develop the harbour area and plans are being developed to showcase one of our great assets by the water.

Our region is doing better than most others. Commodity prices are up and we hope some of that money will flow through shops and other service providers.

It is good to see a number of neighbourhood reserves being done up, thanks to the community for telling us what you want. The vision is great.

It's pleasing to see that the average rates increase is below inflation. Thanks to our staff and councillors for their hard work.

Congratulations to Sir Tamati Reedy on his investiture at Hiruharama.

On the whole, we continue to work hard for you all. Our doors are always open, please use our "request for service" phone line 867 2049 for anything to do with Council.

Tena ano koutou ki nga mate kua wheturangitia,
God bless all those who have departed from us.

Kia ora, Meng



Our City Watch team (from left Cary Walker, Kevin Barrett and Matt Matenga) continue to do great work on behalf of the community, helping retailers and Police as they deal with shoplifters, defuse domestic situations in the CBD and generally make our city a safer place to be. They may look like they are having the time of their lives as they walk around city streets but, rest assured, they have their eyes and ears firmly on the lookout for any untoward activities.

Vital to keep investing in facilities

By 2016, funders willing, the city can expect to see some major projects either under way or completed. These include projects mooted for some time like the Tairāwhiti Navigations Project, the upgrade of the War Memorial Theatre and the Waipaoa River Flood Control Scheme, the extension of the library, the development of aquatic and indoor sports centres and even the completion of the much-touted river and beachside cycle and walkways.

Yet Council's strategy, since the global economic crisis began to emerge in 2008, was to deliberately push out any non-essential capital investment in community facilities and key infrastructure and some operational investment. The wastewater treatment plant was an exception to this.

The 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan had nothing of substance in new capital investment, only plans for pre-feasibility studies on the War Memorial Theatre and H B Williams Memorial Library extension.

Time to consider priorities for next decade

Keep an eye out over the next few months for news about next year's Ten Year Plan – the long-term plan that sets Council's priorities for 10 years through to 2022.

Planning and performance manager Harley Dibble says groups and individuals should start thinking about

Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie says that as the months count down to the 2012-2022 Ten Year Plan, it is time for the community to seriously consider what community facility projects it expects to see under way within the next three to five years.

"This region has natural attributes that are world beaters but we can't lose sight of the need to have a core set of facilities that communities expect today. I am not talking about world-class facilities, I am talking best-in-class that someone living in provincial New Zealand expects to be provided with today and is willing to pay for.

"The challenge is going to be delivering these projects on a timeline that the community finds acceptable, and that is affordable.

"There is a risk that Council may run ahead of the community's appetite for investment but if we don't start, we could risk missing the boat altogether. We need to be ready to move when the community wants us to.

what they would like Council's priorities to be for this planning period and how they can get involved. Consultation between August and October will give people the chance to comment on what they see as future issues and where Council's spending emphasis and priorities should be.

"There will be a point where people make a judgment about Gisborne being a good place to live, work and do business based on what they see. If we don't keep up the investment, we will fall behind."

Mr McKenzie says the feedback he has received is that funders would look more favourably at Council investing in community facilities if Council had clear priorities and a greater commitment to ratepayer funding. Currently, only 5 percent of ratepayer funding has been committed to major projects such as the War Memorial Theatre.

Applied for a rates rebate?

It's not too late to apply for a rates rebate for the 2010-11 year. If you own the home you live in and your household income is about \$33,000 or less, ask Customer Services staff whether you are entitled to a rates rebate of up to \$570. Applications close Thursday 30 June 2011.

Department of Internal Affairs figures show that while 60 percent of eligible people in the district have gained a rates rebate, another 40 percent is eligible – that's more than 1000 people. Since last July, Council has processed nearly 1700 rates rebates worth \$914,270, slightly up on last year. Senior rates officer Fiona Scragg says that although the income threshold is \$22,340, ratepayers can earn over that amount and still receive a rebate. From 1 July 2011, the income abatement threshold will increase to \$23,240 and the maximum allowed rebate to \$580.



Commercial property manager Matt Feisst with the historic Kaiti freezing works building now being readied for lease and possible sale.

Relief for historic freezing works building as strengthening begins

The last remaining brick building of the Kaiti freezing works empire is destined to last another century thanks to Council's involvement in its ownership and repair.

Following a land swap agreement with Eastland Port Ltd, Council will later this year take ownership of the former The Works café building and surrounding land. Urgently required earthquake-strengthening work is expected to begin shortly and continue for about three months. Until ownership is transferred,

Council is leasing the building from Eastland Port so the strengthening work can be done.

Commercial property manager Matt Feisst says that once this work has taken place, the building will be leased out or possibly sold. The building is currently empty as the lease expired with the need to undertake strengthening work.

"Tenders were let earlier this month. The work includes new foundations, new structural steel strengthening and a new roof. Some basic repairs were made in

about 1999 but no real improvement was made to the structure. This building is historically significant to the city, particularly as part of its industrial heritage, yet had no protection under either the Council's District Plan or New Zealand Historic Places Trust registration. Without Council being involved, someone could have demolished it.

"Council was keen to make sure all reasonable endeavours were made to save the building and return it to commercial use."

Rates struck but business as usual

Persistence pays off when it comes to making submissions to Council's Draft Annual Plan.

Just ask Ka Pai Kaiti, which for several years sought a grant to help run the Ilminster School pool for the local community over the summer holidays. This year their request for \$5000 in funding was successful.

Council also agreed to increase by \$5000 its grant to Surf Life Saving New Zealand, now \$57,000, with the aim of extending the duration of lifeguard services on city, Wainui and Tolaga Bay beaches; and to

provide \$2000 to Te Kohanga Reo o Ngai Tamanuhiri in Muriwai for play equipment. Planning and performance manager Harley Dibble says a large proportion of submissions received



Council put in \$5000 to running Ilminster pool next summer. The Gisborne Herald

supported Council's planned major projects.

"Many Gisborne Intermediate students took the opportunity to become involved in the process by making submissions – with most in support of the War Memorial Theatre and Motu Trails.

"There was also support for the amendment to Council's development contributions policy to include funding for infrastructure in the western industrial area."

The Council adopted this "business-as-usual" plan last month which will see a 3.5 percent rates increase collected across the district from July – less than half the rates increase projected in the 2009-19 Ten Year Plan.

For some ratepayers, there will be a very low, or no, increase. For most city ratepayers and those with

low-value properties, rates may rise or fall by less than \$2 a week. Higher capital value properties have higher increases of about 8 to 10 percent depending on their location. This is largely because the savings have occurred in activities they do not pay for or as a result of Council's revenue and financing policy affecting the way rates are distributed to different properties.

More than 100 submissions were received on this year's 2011/2012 Draft Annual Plan. All submitters can expect to receive a decision letter about their submission by the end of June.

The Mayor, councillors and Council staff attended 21 Community Update meetings as part of the consultation process during March.

Common themes to arise were the impact of forestry on rivers and roads, and drainage concerns on the Gisborne Flats. Some concerns were met through 26 Requests for Service, which are addressed through Council's normal work programme.

"These meetings are a chance for communities to hold Council to the work commitments it outlined in the previous year."

Council well-placed to invest in future projects

A few myths have been debunked since Council underwent benchmarking exercises to gauge its performance against other territorial local authorities (TLAs) and similar provincial councils.

Group manager community planning and development Nedine Thatcher-Swann says that, relative to all other TLAs, Gisborne is in a strong financial position with the ability to debt-fund more projects.

Benchmarking – BERL, TRENDZ and Council League Tables – shows Council's financial performance is strong and its debt per ratepayer of \$1808 is half the average of \$3686 across all 73 TLAs. Gisborne's rates increases were lower than all others, averaging 2.7

percent against 8.5 percent for all TLAs.

"The benchmarking showed Council had prudent spending levels with a good balance between income and expenditure. Our region's unique characteristics including fewer residents per square kilometre, less dwelling density and longer roads is reflected in our spend on utilities, being the highest in our G9 group, and our spend in areas like community infrastructure, which is the lowest."

Gisborne was 26th of 73 in Council League Tables for the combined measure of financial sustainability and affordability, but individually scored 5th for sustainability and 52nd for affordability.

"While Council is financially sustainable and doing

most things well, the region has fundamental issues around wealth and population growth – or lack of." BERL ranked Gisborne at 12th of 72 for economic performance and 27th for the ease of doing business.

"We have strong performance, our rates are not so bad when you compare ourselves with others and economic development is happening. But we need to think about our future spend like capital programmes and ways to address the affordability issues through increasing wealth or attracting more people here. With projected low revenue and low expenditure relative to other councils, we're flatlining, not going up or down."

In short

Chief executive led way with district council

Former chief executive Bob Elliott led Gisborne District Council into a new era of local body amalgamation from 1989 as its first and, to date, longest-serving chief executive. He retired from the role in 2007 and died, at the age of 70, late last month.

Of Ngati Porou descent through his mother Margaret (Mokemoke Collier, a descendant of Spanish trader Jose Manuel), he followed his post and telegraph engineer father David Elliott into the field of engineering. After leaving Gisborne Boys' High, he joined the Ministry of Works & Development as an engineering drafting cadet and studied on the job. He went on to complete his Bachelor of Engineering (civil and structural) through Auckland University, working first on Auckland's rapid rail scheme and Mangere Airport extensions in the early 1970s. He was posted to Dunedin as liaison engineer for the Clutha project and after a change of government returned to Gisborne in the mid-1970s as project engineer with the East Coast Forestry Project. He soon afterwards became assistant engineer at Cook County under Louis van Melsem, who he regarded as one of the most influential people of his career, then engineer and later county manager.

He said the settlement with owners of Paokahu, whose land had been used as a city and district landfill, and Council's purchase of the former Heinz-Wattie site were two of his most pleasing accomplishments. His biggest and most influential was the ability to amalgamate diverse community interests into a collective direction for the district. After retiring, he remained a valued director of Tauwhareparae Farms Ltd.

New turf soon for hockey

Poverty Bay Hockey will, in the next few weeks, know which of three Council reserves it will be able to call home. After withdrawing their interest from the earlier preferred site of Churchill Park, in which there were tūngata whenua interests and which was not able to be funded, the hockey group started again. With Council's help the hockey group has narrowed down its search to Harry Barker Reserve, Childers Road Reserve and Nelson Park. Waikirikiri was ranked fourth but its relative remoteness worked against it.

Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie says Council will be more active in the process this time in the interest of all sporting codes.

"A Heads of Agreement is being drawn up that commits us to a course of action. I have advised the other codes on these localities about what's going on and will meet them to discuss the options. Council is going to have to make a call on the preferred site in the wider community interest, if that site is on Council land. While each site could potentially displace a sporting code, we will be careful not to compromise the future of cricket, soccer or hockey in the district. We see challenges and opportunities in having the hockey turf in one of these sport precincts."

Council staff are working on soils, hazards, parking and utilities issues while the hockey group works on consents and funder relationships to see if previously committed funds can be transferred to a new site.

Flush water before drinking

Residents are reminded of the Ministry of Health recommendation to flush a mugful of water from drinking-water taps (including those with filters) each morning before use to remove any metals that may have dissolved from plumbing fittings. This is recommended for all households, including those on public and private water supplies.

Cleaner water in the bay

The city's new wastewater treatment plant is performing well. Visible signs of improvement include clearer water at the end of the outfall pipe and a reduced incidence of plumes in the bay since the biological trickling filter system was commissioned. Project engineer Peter McConnell says the reduction in plumes could be the result of better oil and grease removal being achieved by the new system.

"Divers clearing the outfall in May report much-improved water clarity around the end of the pipeline with a cleaner material, and less black sludge, in the bottom of the diffuser. The vortex grit separator is very effective at removing fine grit less than 1mm in size, about 200 kilograms of it a day. With the old plant, most of this would have been discharged to the outfall pipeline.

"The grit removal probably contributes to the reduction in enterococci through the trickling filter plant as bacteria would be attached to the grit. About three tonnes of wastewater screenings and grit are sent to landfill out of the district each week."

Motu Trails on track for year-end completion

Come Christmas time, you could be cycling through the real New Zealand bush on our doorstep as part of the Motu Trails – one of the 18 Great Rides that form Nga Haerenga, The New Zealand Cycle Trail.

The Pakihi Track section of the cycleway is almost complete, a major swing bridge across the Pakihi River will be finished by the end of August, and planning for a new walk and cycle bridge across the Otara River in Opotiki is on track. All going well, the \$2.5m Motu Trails will be opened by the Prime Minister after the General Election later this year.

Group manager environment and policy Hans van Kregten, Council's representative on the governance group overseeing the trail's construction, was particularly inspired after walking part of the track at Easter.

"It will be a fantastic ride. It's not steep. It's more of a gentle slope going through stunning native forest and along beautiful streams to provide a remote bush experience. The Motu Road itself is a unique ride through New Zealand back country. The cycleway should attract a segment of the

international tourist market that are into physical experiences. International tourists want to see real New Zealand experiences. They want to talk to and hang out with authentic New Zealanders then and listen to their stories about the region. They are prepared to pay good money for that."

Although most of the trail is within the Opotiki district, the trail offers many opportunities for people within the Gisborne region including accommodation and food in the Matawai and Motu areas.

"This new asset will bring people to Gisborne. The communities of



Motu and Matawai are enthused about making use of the opportunities it will present and hopefully there will be future opportunities to link Motu to Gisborne via Whakarau and Te Wera/Wharekopae roads, Eastwoodhill, Rere and Patutahi vineyards." Experiences from the Central Otago Rail Trail show visitors are happy to pay for well-organised services, food and accommodation.

The Motu Trails includes a full two-day, 120km ride as well as day and multi-day rides to suit different age and fitness levels.



New property services manager Grahame Smail gets acquainted with parts of the city that come under his brief.

Factotum ready to help make a difference

Grahame Smail took a convoluted journey to discover that his heart lay in making a difference, most notably within a council context for the public good.

The new property services manager is a regular factotum, a jack of all trades. After leaving school on Auckland's North Shore, he worked for a few months as an apprentice electrician followed by time as a cabinetmaker's labourer and welder and fitter.

He completed a parks cadetship at the Auckland Regional Council and later had parks positions with Wanganui District Council and Lands and Survey in Taranaki.

Social and youth work have been another facet of his career. In the 1990s, he managed faith-based touring performing arts groups Y-One and Excel. After this, during a seven-year stint in Gisborne, he completed a degree in social work while also working at Tairāwhiti Museum as an exhibition technician, for Inter-City as a busdriver, for Eastland Moorings tying up ships and for Presbyterian Support with youth.

For the past three and a half years he has been community facilities then parks and reserves manager with Central Otago District Council based in Alexandra. He loved his time there – his colleagues threatened to take the wheels off his car to keep him there – but the thought of helping to make a difference in the Gisborne district, where he has family, helped tip the balance.

"The coast is a great place to be and one of the neat things about working with a territorial local authority is the opportunity to help make a difference and build capacity within the community. It also provides a challenge in helping to facilitate and achieve community aspirations and drive improvement in the delivery of services."

At a work level, he is looking forward to working with a great team at the Council and being in a bigger town. Alexandra only has about 4000 people.

"At a personal level, I would also like to re-engage with a local church and do more music."

Cenotaph set to be fully restored

Things are moving down at The Cenotaph site. The memorial itself moved quite significantly during the December 2007 earthquake but repair plans were stymied when its interior was found to be hollow not solid concrete as first thought. Now moves are afoot for its complete reconstruction rather than just a repair job.

Council has decided to try to reach an agreement with the insurance company for a financial settlement now that the memorial will not be repaired, and proceed – in conjunction with a Gisborne interest group

and NZ Historic Places Trust – to raise about \$2m to take down and rebuild the monument, incorporating the strengthening works that would have occurred under the insurance repair. The project could take up to three years by the time funds are raised and the work completed.

The finished work will be a fully restored monument incorporating earthquake-strengthening to the interior. A significant place of gathering for commemorative services, The Cenotaph has the highest Category 1 registration with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Getting down to nitty gritty with Waipaoa

Raising the stopbanks of the Waipaoa River Flood Control Scheme to cope with a 100 or 150 year flood is almost a given. What needs to be decided is who pays and how much.

The subject will be a hot topic for next year's 2012-2022 Ten Year Plan due to come into effect from 1 July 2012. Physical works may not begin for two years after the design, land acquisition and other stages have been completed. In the meantime, consultation is moving ahead with affected landowners and the general population, most of whom benefit from having the scheme.

protects the fertile Gisborne Flats and enables the district to successfully grow a diversity of crops with a multi-million dollar earning capacity.

Group manager engineering and works Peter Higgs says the options for discussion range from the status quo to protection from a flood with a 150 to 200 year return. Costs range up to \$24m.

"We have started consulting on the options, how it will be funded and who will contribute. This could be a combination of direct and indirect beneficiaries, and possibly other contributors. The general consensus – about 75 percent of people – is that we need to

upgrade the existing scheme which has a level of protection for a flood with a 70-year return period, that's equivalent to the size of Cyclone Bola.

"We ask, is that a satisfactory level of protection given the economic contribution made by the Flats to the region? Landowners also say we need to upgrade considering the impact of climate change which is expected to bring more frequent and more intensive rain events.

"Preliminary feedback indicates a preference for a 150-year level of protection that allows for climate change."



Watts & Hughes worker Chris Brown makes quick work of new decking at Council's Wildish Street units.

Range of unit accommodation extended

Some residents in Council's Wildish Street units will soon be sunning themselves on spacious new decks. The decks across the length of two groups of units will also have new ramps rather than steps to provide easier access for residents. The carpark is also being extended to provide all 24 residents, rather than just 15, with their own carpark.

Commercial property manager Matt Feisst says the work enables Council to offer a better range of accommodation across the complex.

"In the past, residents who found the steps difficult

had to move out and into another housing complex with better access. The aim over the next eight years is to look at all Council's flats and do something similar. The changes will give the tenants more usable deck space with enough room to plug in a mobility scooter for charging.

"We are better managing our expenditure on the units and are taking a long-term planning approach to maintenance. This is working well."

The Council's \$10m housing asset has accommodation for 122 people over the age of 55.

Preventing crime through environmental design

It could be something as simple as trimming trees, reducing the height of a fence or putting in a new street light. But preventing crime and improving safety and visibility comes in many different guises. Various initiatives are now taking place across the city thanks to Ministry of Justice crime prevention grants totalling \$186,000 – a \$30,000 graffiti prevention grant, a \$111,000 Street-by-Street Programme (over three years) and a \$45,000 Elgin urban revitalisation project.

The graffiti prevention grant has been used to lower the brick wall at the Cook Plaza on top of Titirangi, improve the I-site in Grey Street and the park behind the library.

Principal planner urban design Duncan Rothwell says changes to the library park have made it more visible from many vantage points. The old disused bike shed has been removed with new bike racks installed in view of the library, the fenceline changed to post and cable and new play equipment due to go in soon.

The Street-by-Street Programme focused around the Kaiti area aims to reduce alcohol-related crime and domestic violence. This multi-agency project involves Housing NZ, Tairāwhiti District Health Board, ACC, Police and Council.

"We go to one street at a time and look at the

physical improvements that could be made to help open up sight lines and improve lighting. As part of this, we will relocate play equipment to a new more visible location within the neighbourhood Martin Road Reserve. We also closed one accessway but put in new footpaths to mitigate that loss. After a community hui to discuss options, the play equipment was redesigned to enable unstructured play with climbing rocks, a flying fox, roly poly hills, high swings and a taniwha climber – all vandal resistant due to the lack of flat surfaces."

Elgin's urban revitalisation includes design improvements for Blackpool Park, beautification and better lighting, and a working CCTV camera at the shopping centre.

"We are trying to have more eyes on the streets and come up with solutions to deal with the under-used car park at the rear, which is particularly unsafe after dark. The Childers Road entrance to the carpark may be used by the Police mobile bus to give the local constable a presence."

The Elgin community is now deciding which improvements could come first.

Ask at Council for pamphlets on graffiti prevention and home security or go to www.gdc.govt.nz/graffiti/ and www.gdc.govt.nz/home-security

New plan for managing district's freshwater

Taking freshwater from the district's aquifers, rivers and streams is about to enter a new ballgame.

With the National Policy for Freshwater Management taking effect from July, Council is developing a regional plan, ensuring freshwater management is a priority for the district.

Senior planner natural resources policy Keriana Wilcox-Taylor says a regional plan will include setting freshwater allocation limits and freshwater quality limits for all water bodies in the district.

Meanwhile, about 130 people within the district may need to have their water meters checked within the next few years to determine whether they comply with resource management regulations governing the measurement and reporting of water takes.

Their water meters need to be sealed and tamper-proof, able to store and record data, and verified as accurate by a qualified person. Users taking between 10 and 20 litres a second will need to have such a meter by November 2014.

"Water users will need to provide weekly records of how much water they take or don't take. And they will need to send an annual report to Council.

"Knowing what water is available will help us accurately set levels. Up until the new regulations came into place, Gisborne District Council had been one of few councils to require meters for all irrigation takes."

Council officers will deal with permit holders on a one-to-one basis, and attend local meetings as necessary to discuss the implications of the regulations.



Murals – like this Graeme Mudge one about the forestry industry on the wall at the entrance to the port bypass road – also help prevent graffiti. At the library park (below), tree-trimming and the removal of an old bike shed have significantly improved visibility.

