

Media Release

31 March 2020

Kaipara District Business Operations

Kaipara District Council has been continuing its work to help support residents through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Dr Jason Smith says he has heard from many people who are finding it tough and that the Council is going the extra mile to provide support.

“One of the most important things Council can do is to continue to provide lifeline services that are essential for people in their daily lives. Our people are out there helping to keep people healthy and safe throughout the Level 4 Lockdown and beyond,” says Mayor Smith.

These services include ensuring households have safe drinking water, that the wastewater system keeps operating, rubbish is collected, burials can take place, essential roading and safety repairs are made, emergency services (Civil Defence) are on hand, and continuing to monitor the ongoing drought situation.

While those are ‘business as usual’ services for Council staff, they are having to take additional precautions to stay safe as they are out and about in the community during the pandemic.

Chief Executive Louise Miller says Council staff are really committed and are working harder than ever to keep other services functioning.

“Most of our staff are able to continue working from home, processing Resource Consents and Building Consents so projects are not held up, responding to phone enquiries or issues, responding to dog attacks and keeping the lines of communication open.” says Ms Miller. “Last week our skeleton team in the Contact Centre was fielding the usual volume of enquiries.”

Council staff currently not needed to keep essential services operating are being deployed to back-up and support these services or to support the Civil Defence response.

“We have a team of 10 who are working with our Civil Defence partners, developing plans to help our most vulnerable people, with more staff ready to swing into action if needed.”

The Council is also looking to the future and how they lead the economic bounceback once we drop to Level 3. Officers are working on securing additional Crown funding for new infrastructure projects that will provide employment opportunities and benefit the district. The Council will need staff and other resources to manage the projects’ delivery.

“All these services, and the staff that provide them, are paid for by rates and we need those who can to continue paying them as normal,” says Ms Miller. Without them our recovery will be much slower, more painful and more expensive next year. Our key focus is to support those in our community who are facing hardship; if you are worried then please contact our rates team.

The Council is doing some economic modelling to enable Elected Members to make future decisions based on sound evidence, once the impacts of the pandemic lockdown become clearer. They’re following guidance from Local Government New Zealand and have started a conversation with Elected Members to review rates penalties, possible rates postponement options and

arrangements for paying rates for those who normally pay by EFTPOS or cash. Decisions will be made over the coming week or two.

“We’re mindful it is really tough and we’re already working with a number of people to set up payment plans. If people are suffering hardship we urge them to contact us early so we can provide help and support,” says Ms Miller.

ENDS