

December 2012

To all Kaipara District Council residents and ratepayers

In previous communications, I advised that Commissioners were working as quickly as possible to resolve the historic issues in regards to rates. At the Council meeting next week, we will be formally considering an initiative to help address those issues and allow Kaipara to begin focusing on the future and not just the past.

Historical rating errors

At the meeting, we will be considering options to deal with the rating errors that occurred between 2006-2012. It is important to note that most of the errors made were procedural or technical. The services which the rates helped pay for were still supplied.

None of these errors apply to the 2012/2013 rates which are due now and need to be paid. Nonetheless, historical errors were made and a number of people, quite rightly, have asked that they be addressed.

A number of options are available to us – some better than others. They are all detailed in a publicly available report to Council that will be discussed at the Council meeting on December 18. In considering the options, Commissioners will be mindful that we want to:

- develop a solution that is efficient and effective and is as fair as possible to all ratepayers,
- avoid making matters worse and more complex for ratepayers,
- fix the issues as quickly as possible and in a way which provides certainty going forward.

We also want to do more than just correct the historic rates. We want to address the inequities, for example, of how the Mangawhai targeted rate (which was used to help pay for the capital cost of building the scheme) was applied. Fairness is paramount. We also want a solution that allows ratepayers to have their say and for their concerns to be addressed.

At this stage, it appears that the best way forward may be via legislation, where a Local Bill is introduced to Parliament. Other Councils have addressed similar issues in a similar way.

The Local Bill would work its way through all the normal channels, including a Select Committee. The Select Committee would call for submissions and would hold public hearings – hopefully here in the Kaipara District.

Unfortunately, these processes are not quick. However, they will allow us to deal with a significant issue and move on. We will do all we can to

keep you informed of any decisions made in regards to the options being considered and of the progress as a result of those decisions.

Accountability

Many people have spoken or written to Commissioners about Council's debt, and about bringing to account those responsible for the debt. The Commissioners are very aware of this sentiment in the community and are doing all we can to address issues of accountability. There are some legal issues we need to be aware of to ensure we do not make the situation worse.

The Auditor-General's office is conducting an investigation into the Mangawhai community waste-water scheme. The poor management of the scheme has been responsible for much of Council's debt. As soon as the Auditor-General's report is available, we will be considering it with urgency and will take whatever steps we can, as quickly as we can, to address the issues raised.

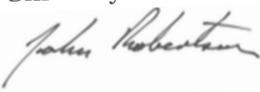
This week, we also began holding to account more than 400 ratepayers who have long-standing debts to Council. By now, most of those ratepayers will have received a letter advising that Council will be taking legal action to recover long-term unpaid rates unless payment is received before Christmas.

The amount owed by these people is around \$450,000. It is money owed to the District and we are pursuing it on your behalf.

It is now around 100 days since the Commissioners were appointed. I would like to thank those people who continue to offer us their support and their feedback. Kaipara people have no hesitation in sharing their opinions and offering different points of view! I would also like to thank those people who over the past month, have reconsidered their positions and have now paid their rates in full.

The overwhelming message we are getting from the Kaipara community is for us to 'get on with it'. Please be assured that is exactly what we are doing.

Sincerely



John Robertson
Chairman of Commissioners

Looking forward

There is no doubt that the issues of the past need to be addressed, and we are working to do that as quickly as possible. However, Commissioners are also keen to ensure that we look forward and work alongside the people of Kaipara to help create a positive future.

There are plenty of formal processes and planning instruments that help any district, including Kaipara, plan for the future. Council's Long Term Plan considers financial, service, and asset management implications for the next 10 years. The District Plan sits alongside this and specifies development and resource use parameters.

However most of us know that the future of any district is often shaped by efforts within its own communities. Kaipara is no different. Over the past three months, Commissioners have met with many community groups and have been impressed by their energy and passion. Increasingly, we are being asked to support initiatives from these groups and when we can, we are more than happy to do so.

Creating a community is a partnership. If we can work with groups and individuals in the community to achieve good public outcomes, we will do so. If we can facilitate matters, or help lead great public initiatives, we will be happy to help. Just ask.

Your Commissioners



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John Robertson
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Richard Booth



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To contact us

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Should you wish to communicate with Chairman John Robertson, please contact the Council or e-mail John at jrobertson@kaipara.govt.nz.