



Dear Ratepayer

Commissioners are often asked how things are going.

Nine months into our work, we are working well as a team and well with Council's management and staff. We have bedded in good governance. We are developing clear policy. Most importantly, we have been reconnecting Council with you and the many communities that make up the Kaipara District.

There are a number of key steps that we have addressed at speed, including:

- Managing the core services of Council better. The outsourcing of so many of Council's services to consultants and contractors stripped the Council of expertise to plan, manage and monitor contracts. We are changing the balance, bringing some expertise back inside the organisation, as we strive to become a high performing Council.
- Putting financial disciplines in place. We are living within our means, for the first time in several years. We have at the same time capped debt at \$80 million, and put plans in place to pay this down over time.
- Beginning to address the raft of historical rating errors that have occurred over many years, by way of a Local Bill to Parliament.

There are a number of other specific questions that Commissioners are often asked. We can answer some of these below.

When is the Auditor General likely to release her report?

Progress on the inquiry by the Auditor General into the Mangawhai Community Wastewater Scheme is outside of our control. On 9 May, the Office put out a media release on progress which can be accessed at www.oag.govt.nz. This release indicates that they are now moving to the phase in which they will be giving those affected by the report an opportunity to comment before it is finalised. Hopefully, this will mean that we will see the final report in the not too distant future, but the release does indicate that during this phase additional work may be identified which means that it could take time.

Why did you choose a Local Bill to rectify past rating errors?

If past Councils had been more careful, we would not have needed a Local Bill. Such a Bill is the only practical method to address the range of historical rating mistakes made. It is also a very transparent way to address these issues. Members of Parliament (MPs) will scrutinise this Bill after receiving submissions from the public.

Despite the errors that were made the fact remains that the services that the rates were collected for were provided, they continue to be provided, and most people have paid the rates that were charged.

Will the Bill, if passed into law, mean that ratepayers who are current with their rates will be charged additional rates?

No. Most ratepayers are current with their rates. The Bill will not create any new obligations.

Are penalties being applied to those who are not paying their rates?

Yes. Property owners need to pay their rates, and as is the case with other Councils, late payment of rates incurs a penalty.

Will the Bill prevent Council from taking action against any person or organisation if fault is found with respect to past actions to do with the Mangawhai Wastewater Scheme?

No. The Bill will not affect Council's right to bring proceedings. In fact it has a specific clause to put this beyond doubt.

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Kaipara te Oranganui

**KAIPARA
DISTRICT**

Two Oceans Two Harbours

Has Parliament ever validated the errors of other Councils through Bills like this?

Yes, on many occasions. In fact the Tasman District Council has a Bill in Parliament now – *The Tasman District Council (Validation and Recovery of Certain Rates) Bill* - that seeks to validate matters back to 2003.

I hope this is helpful. Much of what Commissioners are attending to relates to historic issues. We also of course need to focus on the future. Much of our future focus is captured in the Council's Annual and Long Term Plans, through to 2022.

Thank you for your support and your patience. We are fixing up years of poor practice. Kaipara will emerge from this with a strong and capable Council organisation in place, able to provide the quality services that ratepayers deserve.

Yours sincerely

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Chair of Commissioners

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