

**September 2017****Mayor's Word: A Year in Review**

Dear Ratepayer

It has been a year since I started this job as Mayor of the Kaipara district. The following details some of the key takeaways for me from my first year. Like all roles it has had its highs and lows. Undoubtedly the biggest high has been seeing first hand the huge personal effort many in our various communities put in to make Kaipara the place it is. The level of community "give back" is huge and I hope rewarding for those involved.

Councillors are working well as a group. A number had no governance experience and that has been a steep learning curve for them. We all arrived light on local government knowledge so a large part of the first year has been spent learning, with a huge number of days committed to that.

As a new council it was interesting to learn more about our biggest business, Roothing. I didn't however appreciate the condition of our roading network particularly the unsealed portion. That's debilitating for all and my telephone rings often. Our reality is tough for those most affected. There will be no overnight fix to a problem that has built up over many years. I have endeavoured to share roading data with you so at least you will understand what we are grappling with and that ongoing trade-off we face in almost every decision we make, debt reduction versus service delivery. It was pleasing to see the public response to the district roading meetings that were held. Of note, the roading programme was adversely affected due to slips from two cyclones, remedial works costing approximately \$3.5 million. In total we have spent \$11.8 million on maintaining our infrastructure assets.

The growth in the east continues as our Building Control Team has consented 683 consents in total which includes 277 new houses over the last year in Mangawhai and the surrounding areas. As part of this growth, in-house staff numbers have increased to reduce reliance on contractors. The demand for building and resource consents has meant that we have increased our staff involved in consent processing so that we can continue to provide a good and timely service. This service is funded from fees charged.

Council has some great staff who are very committed, unleashing their potential through the correct organisational culture will be a focus over the coming period. They are often hampered by many simple failures "of system", telephone lines being a basic example.

The first year has seen the departure of the Chief Executive. The single most important decision (in my view) any governance group makes is the appointment of a Chief Executive. As I write this we are starting that process. We have been fortunate that we were able to find a very capable individual in Peter Tynan to take the role during the interim period.

There are a number of projects happening across Kaipara including the Mangawhai Community Plan which will provide a map to manage growth in the district. This Plan will feed into the budgeting process of the Long Term Plan 2018/2028, which I strongly encourage you to have your say on. If you are able to attend a public briefing, or feedback on where you see the district moving towards in the next 10 years, please take the opportunity, as your views help shape the future of the district as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, debt reduction has been particularly significant this year with a total of \$2.8 million being paid off, primarily towards the district-wide debt for the Mangawhai Community Wastewater Scheme (MCWWS). The graph below shows the public debt reduction from the end of the financial year in 2012 to the budgeted loan amount by the end of the financial year 2018. There is scope for the debt figure to be even lower, dependent on some variable inflow of money this year.

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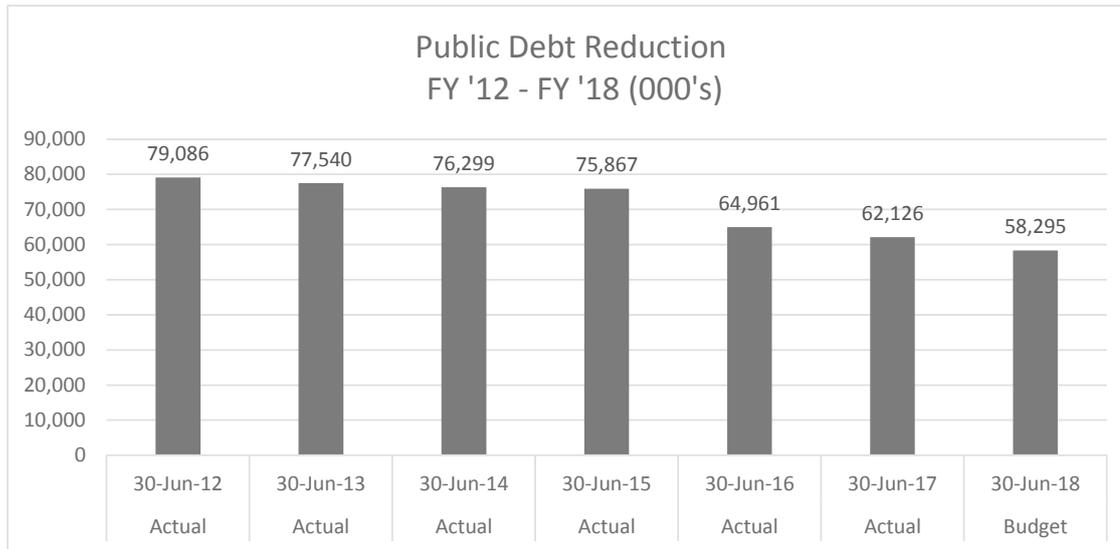
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I would like to thank Richard Booth for his time as independent chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee who had these words to say about our financial position “The Council has had a significant turnaround in terms of its financial position in the last five years and with the prospect of further debt reduction, the Council is in a relatively strong position.” I would like to also make you aware that we will be holding an “AGM” in the Lounge at the Maungaturoto Centennial Hall, on Wednesday 25 October 2017 at 1.00pm. Your attendance will be welcomed.



Greg Gent

Mayor