

town & country matters



September 2009 | Issue 55

From the Mayor, Meng Foon



Tena koutou katoa. A very busy few months for all of us as we start implementing our Ten Year Plan. We have tried hard to keep rates down as much as possible without

compromising our basic infrastructure needs.

The rain in June has made our work more costly, mainly due to slips and dropouts on Council roads.

Thanks to our contractors, staff and the New Zealand Transport Agency for their good work, and most of all to the locals for being so patient.

We are pleased to see all contractors able to tender for the wastewater project, the largest to be built in my time. We have consent, are ready to tender and all we need now is a very good price and the necessary expertise for the ratepayers of the city. We are trying to gain funding from the Government and Eastland Community Trust. We had a good meeting with Prime Minister John Key, Minister of Local Government Rodney Hide and others to discuss affordability issues. Our fingers will be crossed very hard. Gisborne showed off its attributes to the Inbound Tourist Operators of NZ and the world. Well done Tourism Eastland.

It is great to see the success of Tairāwhiti – holding on to Matatini, the 100th anniversary of scouting, opening of the Gisborne Girls' Whare Wananga, Lytton High hosting the science fair, Computers in Homes, the genealogy committee for their good work documenting and correcting Gisborne burial records, the Sunshine Bus service, City Safe for taking the kids home at night, and so much more.

We held a support meeting for people made redundant and met with retailers to mitigate concerns about the central city fire.

My councillors and I have an open door policy. It is great to hear from you and we aim to help.

Kia ora a te wa ka korero ano.

Meng



Where else in the world can you play tennis with friends and family right beside a stunning and safe sandy beach and children's playground, with views of landmark Young Nick's Head and a bay frequented by waka, surfers, yachts, log ships, fishing boats and pleasure craft, for FREE? Getting to Council's three tennis courts at Waikanae can be fun too. A riverside pathway full of historic interest and changing vistas provides the means to safely cycle, walk, skate, scoot, run or hop to and from the central city. It beats getting caught in traffic.

Ratepayers come first in 'local' debate

"Outside" companies were this winter awarded roading contracts ahead of "local" contractors. This saved \$524,000. Predictably – because this is a discussion that arises on a regular basis – some councillors, residents and service club spokespeople cried foul, fearing this would see further job losses and the demise of local contracting firms.

"Why doesn't Council get Joe Bloggs of Gisborne to do the job and keep the money in the city" is a common cry.

Why not indeed? But just what do we mean when we say a business is "local". If a business employs people living in Gisborne, does that make it local?

If a business is based in Gisborne, is it local? Is a national company's Gisborne agency a "local" business? Would such a business benefit the Gisborne community or, perhaps, its national or international owners? How about if a Gisborne-based business uses people from outside the district to provide the service – is that still local?

Little wonder there is confusion about the issue.

Corporate affairs manager Douglas Birt says Council policy says that where there is not much difference in price

between local and distant contractors, Council will stand the difference in favour of the local. But if the price difference is significant, Council will seek the cheaper price.

"The bottom line is, are we saving ratepayers money? Are we getting the best price we can or are we simply subsidising local labour?"

It's not just about price. It's also about the expertise and capability required to ensure a job is completed to the highest standard, on time and to budget. When that expertise is not available either in-house or within Gisborne, "outside" contractors are sought – just as specialist healthcare, such as heart surgery, is sought outside of the region.

Council is committed to its local community and has a major contribution to making it hum. Probably its biggest local spend is the \$14m it spends on wages for its 250 staff and the multiplier effects of that. Millions more go into the community through contracts for services from lawn mowing to roading, from cleaning and tradespeople to transfer station and wastewater plant management.

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Keeping up with rate payments?

Having trouble paying your rates? You're not alone.

At the end of July, owners of 3287 properties in the district were overdue with their rates payments totalling \$3.35m – that's nearly 400 properties and \$860,000 more in overdue rates than in the previous year.

What can you do? Ring senior credit control officer Lyn Corrin on 867 2049. She is there to help you and talk about the best options for a payment plan.

"We can arrange payment plans where the total rates owing for the year up to 30 June 2010 are calculated on a

weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. As long as payments are continuous and adequate to cover the total rates for the year, we can waive penalties. We can usually find a solution to someone's financial hardship."

At end of July 2009, overdue general rates amounted to \$1.42m, an increase of \$276,000; overdue rates on Maori land was \$1.93m, up \$591,000 on the previous year. Rates payments were overdue for 1608 Maori land properties, 340 more than for the previous year; and 1659 general land properties, 49 more than the previous year.

Christmas start date for wastewater treatment plant's physical work

The first sod is expected to be turned for Gisborne's new wastewater treatment plant by Christmas. Designed by CH2M Beca, the total wastewater project is estimated to be completed within a \$45M budget, including escalation and risk costs. Tender documents were issued by the end of August and contractors given six weeks to prepare their tenders.

Staff will recommend one or two preferred tenderers to the full Council for a final decision either in late October or at a special meeting in early November.

The successful tenderer is expected to be notified by mid-November with work beginning before Christmas. The project has two main contracts – the construction of the treatment plant in Banks Street, and the industrial separation scheme.

Once the contracts are awarded, the site will become the contractors' responsibility. Council and CH2M Beca staff will continue to supervise the project. The contractors will be responsible for advising the public about any required road closures, shutdowns or other activities during construction.

The first wastewater is expected to flow over the treatment plant's biological trickling filter by 31 December 2010.



Gisborne Wastewater Project project manager Peter McConnell (hi-viz vest) shows more than 30 contractors' representatives where a wastewater pipe crosses the Waikanae Creek close to the new treatment plant site at Banks Street. The group, representing all companies that earlier registered an interest, were given 36 drawings of the major structures to help them prepare for the tendering process. More than 250 drawings have been prepared by CH2M Beca staff. Part of one building on site has been refurbished to house Council's archives department. A second building will be shifted forward on the site within the next six weeks to make way for construction of the plant.

Cycling councillor a pathway advocate

Councillor Kathy Sheldrake is a committed cyclist. She thinks nothing of cycling from her Matokitoki Valley home to a meeting in the city or a ride with the Critical Mass group which meets on the last Friday of every month.

She is encouraged by the community's overwhelming support, as part of the Ten Year Plan process, for continuing walkways and cycleways in the district. She looks forward to progressing the Waikanae Beach Walkway from Grey Street through to Midway Surf Club, and says the opening of the walk/cycleway from Sponge Bay to Wainui would be a real coup. Unfortunately, the latest word is that no government funding has been approved for either project – news that engineering and works manager Peter Higgs finds greatly disappointing. Kathy Sheldrake, however, has not given up hope.

"I understand significant funds remain in NZ Transport Agency's reserve budget for the Wainui project, and smaller walk and cycleways. We won't give this up without a fight, and safety is a prime factor in this." She is heartened by the increase in people getting out on their bikes for health and fitness.

"The easier, safer and more accessible we can make our tracks the better. We want to enable people of all ages and abilities to use the walk and cycleways.

"The Cycling Advisory Group has achieved a lot in a short time, with a brochure about short rides within the district to be released before summer."

She sees the potential for businesses to develop along the routes of the proposed Tairāwhiti Great Rides, including the magnificent Rere to Motu trail.

She urges cyclists to meet at the Marina carpark, 12.15pm last Friday of every month for Critical Mass.



Councillor Kathy Sheldrake has spent years lobbying for safe walk and cycleways and devotes time to the Gisborne Cycle and Walkway Trust, the Cycling Advisory Group and Critical Mass.

Coast bike rides may qualify for second phase

Hopes are high that the Tairāwhiti Great Rides could be part of the second phase of the New Zealand Cycleway Project. The Gisborne and Opotiki councils and Tourism Eastland are promoting two Great Rides – the Eastland Traverse, an inland route connecting Gisborne and Opotiki on mainly gravel roads, and the East Cape Tour on the sealed Pacific Highway.

Both routes are already used by cyclists. The coast route has had international exposure through the 2000 Lonely Planet cycling guide, which described

the East Cape route as possibly offering the best coastal cycling in the world.

Environment and planning manager Hans van Kregten says that although the proposal missed out on being one of the Government's seven Quick Start tracks announced in July, it could be one of the next groups to be named in mid-2010. New criteria were to be announced this month.

If successful, project funds would be used to promote the routes, provide information boards and cycle storage facilities, and to undertake minor safety works, as well as constructing new infrastructure such as tracks and bridges.

"With cyclists a recognised tourist market, we see opportunities in accommodation, restaurants, retail, cycle hire and repairs and tour operators, as well as cultural tourism. Cycling tourists generally stay for more than a few days and are high spenders."

Pamphlet aids rural fire safety

Is your property at risk from fire? Do you know how to help protect it? Are you aware of the three fire seasons – open (permit not required), restricted (permit required), prohibited (fire ban).

For fire safety tips for rural living, ask for the pamphlet at Council or find it at www.gdc.govt.nz

New trio to patrol the central city streets

Retailers will be going into the summer with a bit of help on the streets. From November, a new CBD Patrol comprising three fulltime Council staff will be the eyes and ears of Police, helping deal with shoplifters and disorder offences and enforcing city bylaws. The jobs will be advertised soon.

Parking and CBD patrols leader Paul Stuart expects the role to develop further and sees the team as becoming city ambassadors, helping with advice

and directions and being a low-level security patrol."

The new patrol replaces the former 101 Patrols, which has not operated for the past year because of insufficient candidates meeting project criteria.

For 11 years, the 101 patrols comprised people identified by Work and Income NZ and was jointly funded by Council, through a targeted rate on retailers, and the Government.

"Retailers wanted the service reinstated. After looking at options, Council decided the best was to employ people directly as permanent staff. A major benefit of this is that staff will be retained rather than being replaced after six months or a year as they were previously. We will be able to build on their knowledge and experience, and provide a much better quality of service and value for money to both the community and the Police."

In short

Parking scheme for CBD residents

People living in the central business district will soon be able to park their vehicles in restricted time zones any time of the day or night. The scheme applies to one nominated vehicle per household and costs \$150 a year, with the fee reviewed annually. The scheme was expected to start this month. Apply at Council or www.gdc.govt.nz

Public can help reduce abuse of disabled carparks

Highly visible blue paint appears to have reduced the number of people parking illegally in spaces reserved for disabled people. But the problem remains. Council will now take action against offenders if witnesses take a digital photo of the offending car, supply the photo to Council and complete a written statement. Council cannot prosecute for illegal parking at supermarket carparks.

Options for warmer homes

Want to make your home warmer and use less energy but can't afford to pay all of it yourself? Several insulation and heating schemes are available with subsidies ranging from 33 to 100 percent depending on circumstance.

See www.energywise.govt.nz for more information. Ring 0800 151565 to register.

Development restricted at Tokomaru Bay

Four new coastal hazard zones covering Tokomaru Bay will prevent new development in the worst-affected areas, including the Waima freezing works site. Existing properties won't be affected but adding to or altering existing buildings in the high risk zones will require resource consents. The appeal period for these variations closes on 24 September.

More seek rates rebate

Over 200 more ratepayers have applied for rebates this year compared with the same time last year. Council has processed more than 1100 rebates (\$586,000) this financial year. Senior rates officer Fiona Scragg says posting application forms with rates invoices encouraged an early pick-up for rebates.

New steps to beach

A long-term solution has been found for steps at Pines, Okitu, which collapsed due to beach erosion. Instead of replacing the steps with some of similar design, contractors have drilled horizontally into the rock to ensure the steps stay in place irrespective of beach changes.

Rocking good fun for summer

A double "shark and dolphin" rocker will provide ongoing amusement for children at the Lysnar Reserve this summer. The new play equipment is being installed thanks to the fundraising efforts of Wainui resident and mother-of-two Ailsa Sheldrake who saw the need and made it happen. Kiwanis, which contributed funds, will install the equipment with the help of other volunteers.

Trees will be discussed

Lysnar Reserve trees that may impinge on residents' views will be a biennial topic of discussion starting from March 2010. The reserve management plan enables residents to apply to Council in writing regarding trees of concern. Meetings will be held every two years with Council staff, DOC, an arborist and the applicants to decide if particular trees can be trimmed or removed.

Fill in website survey and win \$100 dinner

Do you use Council's website? If so, what do you use it for? To check the latest news, search a property or look at burial records? Or maybe you want to pay your rates by credit card.

Vast improvements have been made to the website with many new features added. But Council wants these improvements to continue, and make it easier for people to conduct their business online.

Communications coordinator Karen Hadfield says a \$100 dinner voucher, drawn 30 September, is the

prize for filling in the survey at www.gdc.govt.nz. "Letting us know what other services would be helpful will help us improve our overall service." By the end of the year, full agendas and minutes of meetings will be available and they will be searchable. A new feature also being considered is the ability to view rates accounts and track building consents or LIMs from when first lodged. "The cost of this may be warranted if enough people would find it useful."

Easy access for river and rainfall figures

Next time it rains a lot, keep an eye on the Council website www.gdc.govt.nz. Not only will you be able to track the rainfall at various vantage points in the region, you will also be able to see hourly updates of river levels – at no cost.

Farmers and horticulturalists have in the past relied on an infoline that cost 12 cents for each call. But in the June flood, this stopped working at a critical time. River level information was instead manually added to the website to the delight of users.

Communications coordinator Karen Hadfield says Council knows this information is important to landowners. That's why it's been working to get the system working as soon as possible.

"Rainfall and river level figures will be updated automatically hourly on the website, and presented in graph form to make it easier to track rivers rising.

"We hope to have a text messaging service, to which land owners would subscribe, to alert people to rising rivers. This will free up staff time and phone lines."

The aim is to make www.gdc.govt.nz the first place residents look for this type of information.

Rivers and land drainage asset manager Jurgen Komp is excited about the innovation.

"Web cameras on some main bridges would help staff sort out log jams quickly. We hope to get the latest technology working for us to help us deliver a better service for the community."

To review flood scheme

A review of the Waipaoa Flood Control Scheme has begun with a steering committee comprising staff, landowners and industry assessing options and funding.

Engineering and works manager Peter Higgs says protection works need periodic reviews.

"We will discuss options to improve flood protection levels including raising floodbanks, assess the scheme's capacity and consider funding options."

Consideration would also be given to whether to include the section between the end of scheme, at about Kaiteratahi, and Te Karaka. Full consultation is expected to begin before the end of the year.

Helping to protect Ruatoria

A series of unusually shaped concrete blocks, potentially built by local labour, are expected to be one measure used to help protect Ruatoria from flooding. A working group that includes Council staff is mapping out a programme of works using short and long-term approaches. To protect the township, physical engineering works will be complemented with planting and afforestation. Local job opportunities are expected with the construction of dolosse – large concrete blocks weighing up to four tonnes, used to protect harbour walls from the force of the sea. Consultation will take place on the plans.



Louise Bennett (right) points the way as a land-sea boom, like a floating fence, is set up to contain a mock oil spill in Gisborne Harbour.

New head for pollution response team

The challenge of being in charge and thinking on her feet has seen Louise Bennett become Gisborne's new Regional On-Scene Commander (ROSC) for a marine oil spill response.

A senior environmental health officer with Council, Louise is the second woman to be warranted as an ROSC and the only woman now in the position.

She has been involved with Council's pollution response team for the past 10 years, and was responsible for national waste disposal during the oil spill resulting from the grounding of the Jody F Millennium in 2002.

Inspired by former ROSC Peter Burrows and Maritime NZ people involved in the Jody event, Louise has worked her way through the ranks to undergo the

at-times gruelling training and exams. She was partly assessed on how she controlled various mock exercises.

"It was nerve-wracking, more so because I was the only woman among managers and chief executives from councils throughout New Zealand. I have a great team of about 25, including Council staff and people from the police, Rural Fire and the port company. Most of us have been on the team for more than five years, and there is great camaraderie between us."

On average, the Gisborne team responds to three to six spills a year. Training exercises are held several times a year to ensure the team is ready to respond to any marine oil spill. The next exercise is scheduled for late October.

AML talks on again, leadership group mooted

Council has restarted talks with the Office of Treaty Settlements over the possible purchase of the former Advanced Meat Ltd site near Midway Beach. Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie says the requirement on Council and the Crown to meet a fair market price is challenging. "Public Works Act obligations include the provision to offer the property back to the original owners. Yet its amenity reserve zoning constrains the property's future use and limits its market price." If no agreement is reached with either the Crown or the original owners, the property could go to the open market. Public consultation will take place once Council declares the property as surplus.

Council now has an agreement in principle with Turanga Manu Whiriwhiri – a group of Turanganui a Kiwa Treaty claimants – to establish a local leadership body. The aim is to give tangata whenua the opportunity to have meaningful input "at the top table level" on common issues affecting the Turanga region. The Crown will help establish the body, like an advisory group, with a view to it being a statutory body through the Act that gives effect to the Treaty settlement. "While Council has not shaped agreements on Treaty settlements, there is the expectation that Council will help give effect to them."

Council staff and the Wainui community work together to plant a living barrier between two new stormwater retention ponds and the public beach access at Schools. Native plants and grasses were funded by Council and provided by the Native Garden Nursery.



Planting one of many Wainui projects

It's a busy place at Wainui and Okitu, with more than 20 projects on the go involving stormwater, reserves, foredune erosion control and roading. To minimise erosion due to stormwater runoff during heavy rain, Council has created two new retention ponds at "Schools" and replaced Murphy Road drains with dished grass areas known as swales. Engineering and works manager Peter Higgs says

the ponds will slow the stormwater run-off that previously scoured the carpark and beach area opposite Wainui Beach School. These ponds retain or drain water through vegetation rather than going straight on to the beach. The retention areas will stay empty during dry periods. When full, the extra water will gently overflow through vegetation and be less likely to cause erosion.

PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT SURVEY 2009/10

Gisborne's public commuter bus service provides an alternative to taking your own vehicle to town and saves you the worry of having to find a car park. Council would like feedback from the people who use OR do not use this service, to help make improvements.

Do you use the Gisborne Commuter Bus Service? NO/YES (please circle one) If NO, why is that?

Ratings	1= excellent	2= very good	3 = good	4= poor	5= very poor	6= dreadful
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Please use these ratings to answer the questions below

	Rating	Comments
How do you rate the service?		
How do you rate its value for money?		
Is the service available when you need it?		
Is the journey time reasonable?		
Is the service frequent enough?		
Does your service arrive/depart on time?		
How do you rate safety and personal security ... during the trip?		
... at the bus stop?		
How do you rate vehicle quality/comfort?		

What is the main reason for choosing to use the public transport service? (circle one)

parking costs or availability	to be socially responsible	I like it	quicker	value for money	no alternative
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PLEASE CUT THIS OUT AND POST TO TRANSPORT SURVEY, GISBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL PO BOX 747, GISBORNE

Summary 4th in NZ

Remember Council's Ten Year Plan summary document? Last month it was named fourth best in the Great LTCCP Summary Competition, entered by 51 councils nationwide.

The five judges rewarded clarity, brevity, willingness to engage and 'eye-catchingness' of the layout. One judge said

Gisborne's summary was easy to read, smart, nicely laid out and gave the community clear options for projects. Major matters were covered well; the language was simple, the document had a nice mix of words, charts and diagrams.

Community planning and development manager Nedine Thatcher says the outstanding achievement, against large councils with far bigger budgets, reflects the collaborative and creative efforts of the team involved.

"It's also a result of various improvements to the way we communicate with our communities."

First prize went to Waitaki District Council.

Keeping it local

From page 1: Council also invests significant social value through the contribution of its staff to various clubs, organisations, boards of trustees and the like throughout the region.

Engineering and works manager Peter Higgs says, if companies such as Fulton Hogan and Downer EDI Works are regarded as "local", then 95 percent of Council's contracts have a local content.

"Council prefers to buy local when it can but we have trouble defining what local is. We buy through local dealers – such as our petrol and vehicles – but some of that is from national companies."

This month wastewater contracts were to go to tender for the building of the treatment plant and the industrial separation scheme. Major external companies and smaller local companies are expected to submit tenders.

Some external companies will have a strong component of local subcontractors and suppliers. Outside companies generally use Gisborne goods and services such as accommodation, restaurants and trades, which all benefit the local community. Gisborne subcontractors can in turn benefit from working alongside "outside" contractors who have had the opportunity to undertake regular upskilling.

"Our aim is to balance the best people for the job with getting the best value for money for ratepayers. With government roading funding, we have a requirement to get the best price, usually the lowest conforming tender. Council is committed to improving opportunities for Gisborne contractors and ultimately benefiting ratepayers."

Council's decision to join the "outside" company Bay of Plenty Local Authority Shared Services Ltd (BoP LASS) also raised fears of work going out of town. But, Chief Executive Lindsay McKenzie says, work has instead come into the district.

"The BoP LASS insurance programme, which has already realised a \$216,000 saving for Council, is being serviced by Aon, a company that has been in Gisborne for 27 years."

Under the BoP LASS arrangement, Gisborne is expected to realise savings of about \$300,000 in the 2009-10 year at a total cost of membership of between \$7000 and \$10,000.

When people cry foul over contracts going outside the district, think again about what is local and what is best value for ratepayers.

