



## Chief Executive's message



Kia ora

As you may know, I have stepped into the Chief Executive role in an interim capacity while the Council selects a new person to lead us.

The Chief Executive role is never a quiet one, and by the time you receive this, we will have just completed our Annual Plan and budget process. We listened to, and engaged with, our communities through a formal month-

long consultation, and Councillors now feel that the Plan reflects the work we have in the year ahead.

This year's process has been particularly difficult as we try to keep the rates at an affordable level. A 19.8% increase over the 2022/23 rates income is a reflection of the same financial challenges other business and households face; meaning that it is increasingly difficult to resource our most essential activities and projects at the same level and in the same way as previously.

One of the most visible impacts of our tighter budget management that you will see are the reduced library opening hours. We have just over 6 staff for the three venues. We are unable to fund for a pool of casual staff who can backfill during times of need, such as annual or sick leave. We have regularised the opening hours according to the number of staff we have so the public have certainty of when each library will be open. The timetable will evolve with time.

We have increased our water budget to respond appropriately to the wastewater treatment plant issues we face in all our towns. Council also has an obligation to provide many other services to our urban and rural communities such as the issuing of resource and building consents, animal and noise control, monitoring health and safety standards at food premises, and the maintenance of parks, reserves, public venues, libraries, cemeteries and waste management.

This is a very difficult fiscal climate and every one of us is challenged by it. I hope that this newsletter will help in a small way to assure you that the work we do is necessary and an essential need in our lives. If anyone has concerns about their ability to pay their rates then please contact our rates officer at the earliest 06 306 9611.

Ngā mihi

**Paul Gardner**  
*Interim Chief Executive*

## Speed management

Over late June and most of July, Council has been asking for feedback on our interim speed management plan. This plan stems from Waka Kotahi's Road to Zero campaign to reduce crashes, deaths and the severity of injuries on higher risk roads.

We're starting with schools and marae, where some of our most vulnerable road users are. By the end of 2027, all schools and marae (and kohanga reo centres attached to marae) across the country will have reduced speed limits around them.

In South Wairarapa, the speed management plan will be phased in, starting with a handful of schools and three marae in 2024.

This consultation also invites your thoughts on proposed speed reductions for a list of high priority roads – depending on public feedback and Council decisions, these high priority road changes could be implemented in 2024.

We are doing this because lowering the speed is one proven way of reducing the number and severity of accidents. Some of the new speed limits around the schools and marae would be permanent, others would be variable – which means they change during the day or due to driving conditions. Other measures such as traffic calming measures may also be considered at a later stage.

You can find out more about the draft speed management plan at [www.swdc.govt.nz/speed-review](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/speed-review)



## Why have rates gone up as they have?

Rates are charged for the services you have access to and benefit from, and parts are based on the value of your property.

The cost of services the Council provides have increased dramatically (as it has for households and businesses). As we have a small ratepayer base of around 7,400 rating units compared to the size of our district, these costs need to be spread across that small base.

Another factor unique to our district is that we have three main towns, which means three sets of libraries, three town halls or venues, three wastewater and drinking water systems, three swimming pools, and so on.

We have faced some severe weather events that have caused considerable damage to roading infrastructure, and also have ageing infrastructure. This means that buildings, roads, footpaths, culverts, pipes and water systems need serious maintenance as many are damaged, past their use-by-date and/or at risk of failing.

Like our household costs, all these essential services now cost more than they did in previous years. The Council must also maintain acceptable levels of service and that is why rates are going up. Our biggest costs are always in the water, roading and community facilities space and for 2023/24 they are:

	Capital expenditure \$million	Operating expenditure \$million
Water supply	3.77	4.92
Wastewater	2.68	4.86
Land Transport	2.80	7.23
Community Facilities and Services	1.27	9.07

Read the Annual Plan for details, available from the end of July on Council's website.

## Meet Lisa, our positive ageing champion

Lisa Matthews is the regional Positive Ageing Strategy Co-ordinator for all three Wairarapa councils including ours. She's just been appointed to the Public Transport Advisory Group for Greater Wellington, which, as you'll see below, is very much in line with her work.

*What does your role as Positive Ageing Coordinator involve?*

I work across the three Councils to support Te Hōkai Nuku/The Wairarapa Positive Ageing Strategy. It was launched in 2019 to prepare for our rapidly ageing community and outlines the ways in which we can

collaborate to ensure our older community is both valued and looked after.

Positive ageing means positive ageing for all generations. The strategy's vision is "Our kaumātua/older residents lead valued, connected and fulfilling lives".

*What do you love about it?*

I really enjoy working with the community to enable fantastic things to happen! Things like the Ageing with Attitude expo, the Senior Regional Games and the Senior of the Year to name a few.

*Anything you find particularly challenging?*

Working across three councils is interesting, and also a bit of a challenge. Having said that, I love the diverse teams across each organisation and how they are committed to supporting older people.

*What triggered your interest in Greater Wellington's Public Transport Advisory Group?*

Transport is such an issue for older persons; using the SuperGold Card on the trains to Wellington, bus routes and also just physically getting onto the bus. I felt this was a very real opportunity to lobby on behalf of Wairarapa's older persons.



## A new Pound and time for Dog Registrations

Our animal welfare services are largely funded by dog registrations. Dog registration fees are annually reviewed and most years there is adjustment for inflation. Last year we were able to keep dog fees flat; this year, Council has approved an increase and we invite you, if you are a dog owner, to visit our website and see what our new fees will be. After July 31, 2023, a penalty applies to late payments, so we encourage people to get in early to register their dogs beforehand.

The Council was also delighted to recently open a new dog pound on North Soldiers Settlement Road near Featherston. This is a huge improvement on the previous pound that did not meet government animal welfare standards and could no longer stay at its location.

The result has been an innovative, transportable and cost-effective design by our environmental services team. It has a very small carbon footprint, with self-sustaining power, water and waste management systems. Holding up to four dogs, it will be warm, easily washed and secure on occasions when we cannot reunite a dog and its owner.

Environmental Services Manager Rick Mead says the containerised design was built within a tight budget and achieved a standard that others might well follow.

"We do what we can to get a dog back to their owner, but if we pick up a dog after hours, the Council must provide a reasonable standard of care for the animal."

We are also delighted that the initiative has made the list of finalists in Local Government NZ's SuperLocal SuperIdea Awards. Results are due end



*Matua Abe Matenga of Kohunui Marae blesses the pound buildings. The pound has been gifted the name Te Kuri o Taurira, after Kupe's dog Taurira, who was said to have stood watch on the hills above Featherston.*



*Clean surfaces, good temperature and disease control, and good exercise facilities were all high priorities in the pound design.*



*The compound, which is completely off the grid with solar panels, water tank and septic system.*

## Paying your rates

### Direct Debit

Banks changed to 365-day banking as of 26 May 2023, however, the Council is unable to adopt that approach. It will **not be** processing your payments on a weekend or public holiday.

Weekly and fortnightly direct debits will still be processed on Tuesdays or Thursdays and monthly payment option will still be processed on the 20th of the month. For quarterly options, direct debit payments will fall due on 20 August, 20 November, 20 February and 20 May.

If your monthly or quarterly payments fall on a weekend or public holiday, your payment will be deducted the next business day (Monday to Friday).

### Automatic Payment

At the start of each new rating year, if you are paying your rates by automatic payment, you may need to recalculate your payments for the new year's rates.

Please check your payments and adjust these if required. Your payments still need to clear the quarterly instalment by the due date to avoid penalties.

We are unable to recalculate automatic payments for you. To avoid any issues, you can switch to a direct debit where we calculate the payments right up to 30 June, not each quarter. No penalties are charged if paying by direct debit.



## Rebates 2023/24

The Rates Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to \$750.00 for low income earners. Ratepayers must have been living in the home they own on 1 July 2023.

1. Your rebate will be calculated based on your gross income from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, your rates, and the number of dependants you have. The income eligibility for a rebate is \$30,000 - \$42,000.
2. You must provide details of income from your income provider for ALL forms of income, including interest and dividends. If requested by the Department of Internal Affairs you must provide proof of this income. Application forms will be sent to those who have previously received a rebate in 2022/23. Copies of the form can be obtained from the Council office in Martinborough, Greytown and Featherston libraries, or online [www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms) and can be obtained by calling 06 306 9611.

## Get your rates invoice by email

If you wish to receive your rates notice by email contact [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz)

We encourage you to take up this option to allow Council to use the postage savings on projects that benefit the district.

## Having trouble paying your rates?

Please contact us as soon as possible so we can work with you on a payment plan. Council will make every effort to work with you on this process. As a last resort, Council policy is to approach banks and legal representatives to recover arrears.

For any queries regarding your rates, please contact our rates team at the following email address: [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz)

## Payment by direct debit

Council encourages ratepayers to pay rates via direct debit as this ensures the correct amount is paid and you avoid paying penalties for late payment.

We offer **weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly direct debit options** to pay rates. Direct debit is the easiest way to pay your rates as we withdraw the funds directly from your bank account at the very last minute. That way you will get the benefit of your funds for the longest time and avoid penalties. If you would like to pay using

this method, forms are available from the Featherston and Greytown libraries, as well as the Council office in Martinborough and on our website [www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms). All you need to do is complete the form and send it to SWDC, PO Box 6, Martinborough 5741, or scan and email it to [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz) or drop it off at either the Council office in Martinborough or at the Featherston or Greytown libraries.

## Rates 2023/24 Instalment One

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Enclosed with this newsletter is the rates invoice covering the period 1 July to 30 September 2023.

The last day for payment is 20 August 2023. Please pay by this date to avoid the 10% penalty.

Please help us to process payments by ensuring you include the property valuation number for all properties you are paying for. If paying online please make a separate payment for each property.

**GET IT  
SORTED**

Something needs fixing?  
Let us know...

To South Wairarapa District Council,  
P.O. Box 6, Martinborough 5741

### From:

First name

Surname

What's the problem?

Where exactly?

Street or Road name and number

Your phone number (Should we need to contact you to clarify the details)