



## Mayor's message

What do you feel when you look back over the last year?

When I look back, the overriding sentiment I'm left with is one of uncertainty.

Covid, of course, has been the main driver of this and the way we as a country and as a community respond to that has become increasingly fragmented. It would be easy to get disheartened after a long period of solidarity, and I feel for those who have been prevented from using facilities because of the precautions Covid has required. Our libraries, pools and our events centre are doing what is necessary but not necessarily palatable to reduce the health risk.

At Christmas, I hope that as a community, we can remember our strong points and not let lesser issues divide us. That applies to Council too. The media has been quick to report and amplify any criticism of our decisions. But behind the scenes, Councillors have been making thoughtful contributions and staff have been getting on with the work you expect of us; maintaining parks and facilities, responding to roading issues, consenting houses and so on. This work is being done quietly and well, and I thank staff and your elected officers for all the hard work that's not reported.

At the same time, our recent rates meetings and our perception survey, done earlier in the year, have given us much to reflect on. We want you to know that we are taking these issues on board. Other factors are also increasingly becoming part of the way we measure success: climate change, water quality and social equity. These are lessons for this year and beyond.

Our newly adopted Code of Conduct follows a template used around the country. This has been in the works for some time. It will not prevent debate or criticism within or without the Council and nor should it. It will simply ensure that any criticisms are made in a respectful and orderly way, following the approved policy.

It would be remiss if we did not tell some of the achievements that took place out of the limelight. A good example is the first stage of our spatial plan, a birds-eye view that will provide guidance for our district's growth for the next 30 years. Master-planning for Featherston begins soon.

Our just-released annual report outlines much more such work, and the fact that once non-cash revaluations, vested assets, and extraordinary revenue and expenditure items were removed, our basic budget stayed on course. We will also be selecting the best mechanism for trying to keep our costs – and hopefully rates – down next year.

How many of our plans will fit into the bigger picture remain to be seen. Regulations are changing at pace. Three Waters appears to currently be in pause mode, although the issues that it addresses will not go away.

All in all, it's been a year of evaluation and reflection. Uncertainty and upheaval does that. As we begin a new year, let's hope it's a year of greater unity, greater clarity and courage.

**Alex Beijen**  
Mayor



## Summer Spruce-up

Our amenities team have been giving the place a good going over for the holiday season. Each of our three pools has a BBQ and urgent retiling has been done at Featherston and Martinborough to fix broken tiles.

We've also been experimenting with drought-resistant sedum plants in some very dry traffic islands in Martinborough, creating a surprising yet pleasing effect.

Five new seats are also being installed at various parks around the district, a result of donations from families wanting to remember their loved ones. Each one has a back story – one donated by the Davis family at Greytown's Soldiers Park commemorates a family member who lived nearby and enjoyed the park every day. A fitting tribute.



**Retiling around  
Featherston pool**



**Trial summer gardens  
with sedum plants in  
Martinborough**



**A seat donated to Soldiers Park by the Davis family**

## Code of Conduct

The Council has adopted a new Code of Conduct on how Councillors should behave while in office. It is based on the LGNZ template used by Councils around the country. The old code was a legacy from previous days and work on its replacement has been afoot for a number of months.

Some of the changes include:

- An agreed set of values
- A complaints process
- Modern media engagement guidance for elected members

The Code is not intended to limit robust debate. Members are free to make comment to the media, but must be clear when they differ on policy or decisions that they are

expressing a personal view. They must not purposefully misrepresent the views of the Board, Council or other members.

The Code expects elected members to foster trust and respect in their Council through

- Fair, honest and respectful interactions with citizens
- Being available to listen and respond openly and honestly to citizens' concerns
- Representing the views of citizens and organisations accurately, regardless of the member's own opinions of the matters raised
- Ensuring their interactions with citizens and communities uphold the reputation of the local authority

View the Code at <https://swdc.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/SWDC-Perception-Survey-2021.pdf>

## A very big pruning job

Trees are involved in about a quarter of Powerco's power outages, but the electricity and gas distribution company likes to help protect them when it can. Recently, work to prune and stabilise the historic St Lukes church gum tree was carried out to ensure it survives for many more years. As it was on church grounds, the church was liable for the bill, and the community has been fundraising for more than a year. Contributions from Powerco and the Greytown Community Board, among others, have helped make it possible.

The gum was brought to Greytown in 1856 by Samuel Oates, who pushed several eucalyptus seedlings in a wheelbarrow over the Remutakas. Legend has it the tree was stolen while Oates was at a local bar, and later planted in the church grounds.





## Dogs of Service

Greytown man Joe Taukamo gets plenty of love for his guide dog Ankie but recently he's been turned away from several venues. The reason? No dogs allowed.

Joe recently asked the Council to help make businesses and event holders more aware that support and assistance dogs are an extension of the owner - their eyes, ears or, sometimes, legs.

"Ankie allows me to be independent and move around in the community," he said. "What I would like to see is that there was more awareness around persons with disabilities, particularly for those using service dogs, guide dogs or assistance dogs, to try and minimise their stress. We have a lot to deal with already."

Owners of service dogs may have low vision or hearing loss, epilepsy, mobility issues or a host of other conditions. Guide and assistance dogs are legally allowed to be almost anywhere their owner is and can be identified by their harness.

Joe, who has been blind since he was 19, only received Ankie recently but already the dog has made a big difference to his life. Every morning he gets up early to take Ankie for a walk around town.

"Guide dogs have been around since the 1930s, so it's not new," Joe said. A timely reminder for businesses to understand this legislation and implement it, if not already.



## Covid and the Council

Vaccine passes have become important for several Council facilities including our pools, libraries and the Waihinga events centre. But we want you to know that if you don't have a Vaccine Pass, the libraries now have a "click and collect" service which will allow you to either reserve the books you want and choose a timeslot to collect them, or let our librarians choose for you based on your reading preferences. Please look on the Wairarapa Library Service website for details.

While Covid passes are required for all those 12 years and 3 months or older at certain facilities, they are not required in the public area of our Council offices. Please maintain 2m of social distancing, scan and wear a mask. Other facilities that do not require a Vaccine Pass are our transfer stations, cemeteries, parks and freedom camp sites.

For more details, go to <https://swdc.govt.nz/where-do-i-have-to-have-a-vaccine-pass-common-faqs/>

**Unite  
against  
COVID-19**



## Camping care

As holiday-makers head to the coast, we'd like to draw campers' attention to a new weather service. Metservice has expanded its Heavy Swell Warnings service to the Wairarapa. Details include the combined wave, swell and wind wave height, direction, high tide and atmospheric pressure. It is particularly useful in coastal areas at risk of storms or flash flooding.

Find it here at [www.metservice.com/warnings](http://www.metservice.com/warnings).

## Rebates 2021/22

The Rates Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to \$665.00 for low income earners. Ratepayers must have been living in the home they own on 1 July 2021.

1. Your rebate will be calculated based on your gross income from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, your rates, and the number of dependants you have. The income eligibility for a rebate is \$26,510-\$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 received a rebate in 2020/2021 and are also available from the Featherston and Greytown libraries, the Council office and online [www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms) and can be obtained by calling 06 306 9611 ext. 858.

## 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 to benefit the district.

## Need help with your rates?

There are a range of options available to ratepayers. These include direct debit, applying for a rates rebate, setting up a payment plan that spaces out payments or, in extreme financial hardship, rates postponement. Please contact us to see how we may assist.

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.

Based on feedback from ratepayers, 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 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, 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 2021/22 Instalment three

3

Enclosed with this newsletter is the rates invoice covering the period 1 January – 31 March 2022.

The last day for payment is 21 February 2022. 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. 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, Road, Number

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