

NEWSLINE

APRIL 2022



MAYOR'S COLUMN



With Omicron taking a firm foothold in most parts of New Zealand, we're now finding ourselves having to learn to live with a pandemic within our own community.

As cases soar, the likelihood of getting COVID-19 rises, and by now, you will probably know people within your own networks who have been impacted by it — be that directly or via a household contact.

However, while there's little we can do to stop the virus, it's encouraging to note vaccination numbers within our district are high, children's vaccinations are now available and there is a regular distribution site for locals to access rapid antigen tests (behind Waimate Event Centre, Mon/Tue/Wed/Thur/Sat, 9am to 11am) - no appointment required.

But through this, it's business as usual for many of us, and that includes the Waimate District Council and ensuring we continue to provide core services. That's why the Council's chief executive, in consultation with the leadership team, recently made the decision to remove the vaccine pass requirements for entry to the majority of Council's facilities and offices, also aligning with the Government's decision to scrap all mandates and vaccine pass requirements as at 11.59pm, 4 April.

So let's now hope it's time to look ahead and welcome back a sense of normality in the not too distant future.

In other news, Council has officially joined the Local Government Funding Agency. Following a four-week consultation period, no submissions were received. This membership now means Council have the ability to borrow funds at a margin almost 3% less than regular bank facilities, producing substantial savings.

Meanwhile, as we move towards Easter, the Norman Kirk Memorial Swimming Pool season has come to a close and our Waimate Lakes Camping season isn't too far behind. For all of you who visited either the pool or the lakes area during the warmer months, I hope you enjoyed your visit and made plenty of summer-fun memories. We look forward to welcoming everyone back again in September.

Until next month, stay safe out there and take care.

E-BIKE ROLLOUT PROVIDES PETROL ALTERNATIVE



Five new e-bikes have been introduced to Council's transport fleet, providing an ideal alternative for short trips within the Waimate District.

In a nationwide initiative, the e-bikes have been gifted by Toyota New Zealand as part of a wider corporate rollout of e-bikes across select Government agencies throughout the country.

The T-bike model includes a rear hub motor, powered by a 36 volt lithium-ion battery to assist with pedal power. After just four hours of charge, the bike can travel up to 35 kilometres, providing a low-cost alternative for Council staff to travel throughout the Waimate urban area and surrounds.

Commenting on the donation, Waimate District Council Chief Executive Stuart Duncan said it was an "incredibly generous promotion", pointing out the bikes would be assembled and made available to staff in the coming weeks for work purposes.

"In a place like Waimate, we're fortunate that everything is only a stone's throw away, so these bikes will be a fantastic, cost-effective way for staff to get to meetings or carry out basic errands nearby without having to power up the company car," Duncan said.

"It's yet another example of finding ways to minimise our carbon footprint and make those small changes that will have wide-reaching benefits to staff wellbeing and our environment. Better still, this is in no way funded by rates and will actually help save fuel costs over the long run."

The e-bikes will reside at several Council facilities for ease of access, including Council's main office, Waimate Event Centre and Gorge Road premises.

CROUCHES BRIDGE OFFICIALLY OPENS



After several months of construction, Crouches Bridge is complete and has reopened to traffic. With the old timber bridge coming to the end of its serviceable life, plans were in place to replace the structure with a new bridge – comprising two 16 metre spans. The new bridge, which officially opened last month, has an increased flood capacity.

Work on the bridge, which is located on Youngs Road, has included demolishing and removing the former bridge, drilling piles, placing the concrete and steel, constructing a precast wing wall, pier columns and abutments and installing the deck beam units, among other tasks.

Commenting on the replacement, Council's Roading Manager Rob Moffat said the project had gone according to schedule and was delighted the bridge rebuild was ready for traffic.

"We've done several replacement bridges throughout the Waimate District in previous years, but this is the most significant rebuild in 30 years," Moffat said.

"The contractors have done a fantastic job and we're really pleased with the result."

QUEEN STREET UPGRADE COMPLETE

Work to carry out a major upgrade to the stormwater and wastewater network in Waimate's CBD has now been completed.

In response to historic flooding issues, the upgrade was carried out to help increase the level of drainage in the area, with the new infrastructure designed to withstand significant rainfall.

The project, which was undertaken by Council contractors Rooney Earthmoving Ltd, also served as an opportunity to install fibre ducts, required as part of the Chorus fibre rollout currently underway in most urban areas throughout the district.

The \$750,000 upgrade, funded by both three waters stimulus funding and Council contribution, was scheduled for completion by mid-February. However, due to several minor setbacks and the ongoing effects of COVID-19, the project's conclusion was delayed by approximately one month.

Commenting on the project, Council's Asset Group Manager Dan Mitchell said every effort was made to keep the disruption to a minimum, but appreciates the project took longer than first anticipated.

"Thank you to all business owners and patrons that have been affected by this upgrade . . . we understand there is never a good time to carry out civil works in the main street, but one way or another, this upgrade was required. On behalf of Council and contractors, we appreciate everyone's patience, cooperation and understanding as this critical work was carried out."

COUNCIL ADOPTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Waimate District Council's newly adopted Annual Report for 2020/21 reflects on the significant progress Council has made toward achieving plans set out in the 2018-28 Long Term Plan, notably marked by unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the ongoing uncertainty in the local government sector.

The Annual Report, which was adopted at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 29 March, presents Council's financial results, celebrates key highlights and provides a snapshot of performance over the past financial year.

Financially, the Annual Report details a surplus of \$1.3 million, favourable to the deficit of \$1.4 million initially budgeted. The significant variation is due largely to the income from both rates and building consents exceeding budget and overall finance costs coming in below budget due to positive cash reserves, therefore no additional borrowings were required during the last financial year.

Commenting on the report, Waimate District Mayor Craig Rowley expressed his gratitude to Council staff, Councillors, contractors and the community for their ongoing efforts and contribution to the district.

The 2020/21 Annual Report is now available at waimatedc.govt.nz, or at Council's main office by request.

