

NEWSLINE

5 DECEMBER 2024



Waimate
District Council

MAYOR'S COLUMN



Mayor Craig Rowley

Hello and welcome to another edition of Newsline.

It's hard to believe we are nearing the end of another year, and I would like to thank everyone in our district for helping make it such a great place to live. Although 2024 has brought its challenges, I am reminded of the resilience and community spirit that defines Waimate. With everything going on in the world, we sure are lucky to call this place home.

We have some great events coming up too, with the Waimate Christmas Parade, Strawberry Fare and Christmas in the Square in the next couple of weeks, make sure to get out and enjoy!

On a Council note, I'm pleased to share some positive news. Our ongoing lobbying efforts, in collaboration with the Mayors of Mackenzie and Timaru, have paid off. Environment Canterbury has agreed that the current arrangement of two South Canterbury Councillors will remain—a great win for our region.

Hope to see you today at 1pm for our much-anticipated library opening.

Until next time, take care.



LAST CHANCE FOR CLIMATE STRATEGY INPUT

The draft Waimate District Council's Climate Resilience Strategy is nearing completion ahead of the final community workshop to be held at the Waimate Event Centre at 6pm, Tuesday 10 December.

This workshop will provide a summary of the opportunities presented from the previous six workshops and explore the possibilities of turning these into actions through the lens of community-based leadership, empowerment and collaboration.

Throughout the engagement process, Council has received 359 pieces of feedback from the community. This feedback is invaluable in helping to shape a strategy that is both practical and prioritises what the community sees as our most pressing challenges.

"The workshops have not only facilitated valuable discussions but also fostered a sense of collective responsibility and action among participants. We are aiming to create a strategy that works for us locally – especially around economic resilience given that much of our district's economy is underpinned by sustainable climatic factors", Climate Change and Biodiversity Officer Andrew Oliver said.

The workshops have highlighted a wide range of potential initiatives for the district, including sustainable economic development programs like the establishment of a district freight hub and 'buy local, stay local' marketing. Other suggestions emphasised proactive investments in resilient infrastructure such as flood detention and holding zones. Additionally, participants noted the importance of activities aimed at protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

"In our final workshop we want to know how council can facilitate leadership, empowerment, and collaboration within our community around the many opportunities this strategy has presented," Andrew Oliver said. The next step is for the final draft strategy to be presented to Council for consideration in early 2025.

For more information, and to complete the final survey precluding the workshop, go to waimatedc.govt.nz/climate

PUBLIC INVITED TO LIBRARY OPENING

The much-anticipated Waimate District Library refurbishment and extension has been completed and will open to the public this afternoon. The community is invited to attend the opening ceremony, to be held today at 1pm. Tours of the new facility will be available, followed by a sausage sizzle. The space in the extended area includes an outdoor courtyard, an enhanced children's area, a new youth space plus a technology hub.

Mayor Craig Rowley said it had been a long journey since the extension was first discussed by Council and then included in the 2012-22 long term plan. "This has been a project we have wanted to do for several years. We decided to take the opportunity when the Government offered the Better Off Funding package, with Council allocating \$900,000 from this to the project, which meant the project became more affordable for ratepayers. The library is more than just books, it provides a gathering place for our community and offers services such as internet, computer support and access, which are invaluable as the world moves increasingly online," Mayor Craig said.

As part of the change, the Information Centre will move from the Event Centre to the library to be more accessible to visitors and residents. Mayor Craig thanked staff involved in the design and fitout of the extended library and for all the hard work in setting up the new space. He also acknowledged the patience of our community during the period the library has been closed.

After the ceremony, the library will be fully operational and return to the normal opening hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and between 10am and 1pm Saturday.



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 ADOPTED

Waimate District Council's Annual Report for 2023/24 highlights the achievements and progress towards the intentions of the third year of the Long Term Plan 2021-31.

The Annual Report was adopted at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on Thursday 31 October.



A highlight of the year was the commencement of the Waimate District Council Library extension and Council Chambers refurbishment. Other large projects included public toilet replacements, relining the Norman Kirk Memorial swimming pool, re-roofing community housing, upgrading the Edward Street wastewater system, in addition to ongoing work on roading and three waters infrastructure.

Financially, Council recorded a surplus of \$2.652 million compared to a forecast deficit of \$1.817 million. This was largely due to recognising income for assets which were vested to Council, previously unrecognised assets, increased contributions for water and sewer due to development, unbudgeted Three Waters Government funding, and reduced expenditure compared to what was expected across a variety of areas.

As the surplus for the year includes some large non-cash items, it's important to note that in cash terms, we received income of \$21.7m and spent \$24.93m on operating and capital expenditure. This required Council to draw down on cash reserves during the year and borrow \$0.6m.

Mayor Craig Rowley said there had been some significant achievements amidst a challenging economic and regulatory climate for Councils.

"Council's costs have increased on all fronts, and there continues to be significant uncertainty about how the Government will manage the legislation it imposes on territorial authorities," Mayor Rowley said.

"I would like to thank Council staff, Councillors, contractors and the community for their efforts and contribution to the district."

The 2023/24 Annual Report and summary is available to view on Council's website, alternatively a hard copy of the summary is available at Council's reception.

WASTE TO ENERGY SURVEY RESULTS

The Waimate District Council conducted an online community survey to gauge public opinion on the proposed waste-to-energy plant, Project Kea.

The survey, which ran from 5 to 19 November on the Council's new engagement platform Let's Chat Waimate District, received 735 responses.

In response to the question "do you support a waste to energy plant within the Waimate District?" – 697 answered no, 28 answered yes, and 10 were undecided.

Project Kea has been included in the Government's Fast-track Approvals Bill, meaning, once passed into legislation, it will be referred to an expert panel for review. Council conducted the survey to understand the community's sentiment and will include the results in its submission to the panel, should the expert panel provide the opportunity.



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