

Draft Long-Term Plan almost ready for your input

It's your District, they're your rates so make sure you have your say! To have an input into how we match funding expectations of the community with the money available, look out for a summary of the *Draft Long-Term Council Community Plan*. It will be in your mailbox next month.



Masterton
District
Council

What is the Long-Term Plan and why should I read it?

- Every three years councils around the country review their 10-year plan to make changes which reflect forecasts for the next three years.
- The *Draft Long-Term Council Community Plan* then goes out to the public for consultation. Simply, we come up with what we think will be good for the District for the next 10 years – with a strong emphasis on the next three years – and then we ask for your feedback by way of submissions.
- Once your submission has been considered, we will make any changes necessary then approve the Long-Term Community Plan and use it to guide our service delivery.
- The plan we are working on now will take us from 2009 to 2019.
- Consultation begins next month. Your summary of the *Draft Long-Term Plan* will be mailed to you then, while the full *Draft Plan* will be on our website www.mstn.govt.nz and available at our Council Office and Library.

Mayor's Message – Looking at the positives

“In times of economic austerity, the Council has a key role in sustaining business confidence and positioning Masterton for a timely response to new opportunities.

“The *Draft Long-Term Plan* is in the final stages of preparation now. It has taken into account our dependence on the rural economy and our awareness of the current economic situation and the likelihood of a slow recovery. We'll be proceeding with caution and the revised plan takes this into account.

“Having said that, the Council is looking to contribute to the local economy in many positive ways. We will continue to focus on infrastructure development and invest in the future. We will 'spend for tomorrow' with a focus on resources needed for growth and recovery.

“An example of our faith in the District is the recent arrival of an Air New Zealand direct to Auckland flight service. This shows a real commitment on behalf of a major commercial player to the growth of our District.

“You will see when your summary of the Long-Term Plan arrives that sustainability is a priority. Economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability are of critical importance in our future. This is reflected in the *Draft Plan*.

“Once this *Draft Plan* is released, we invite your feedback. There will be a number of ways for you to 'have your say'. You can complete the submission form on the summary when it arrives in your mailbox, you can go online to www.mstn.govt.nz and you can speak to your submission in person at the Council when the Hearings are being held.

“Whatever you decide, make sure you do make your thoughts known. It's your plan for your District and it will be three years before we review it again.”

Garry Daniell
Mayor





Setting the scene – Masterton today

- Masterton district has a population of 22,623 (2006 Census), with most of you (about 18,000) living in the urban area and about 5,000 living in the rural areas.
- The main ethnic groups are European (77.9%) and Maori (16.9%).
- Household incomes in Masterton are lower than the national average, with fewer people of working age (15 to 65 years) and higher numbers of over 65s.
- The District's land area is 229,500 hectares, running from the Tararua Ranges to the Pacific Coast and from the Mt Bruce Summit to the Waingawa River.
- There are 11,700 rateable properties. Land values total \$2,940 million while capital values (land and improvements) total \$4,836 million.



Investing in our assets

Expenditure on infrastructure is needed. With over \$400 million in assets, Masterton District Council has identified its priority spending in the *Draft Plan* to improve our infrastructure and enhance our potential for growth.

So what do we want to improve?

Reticulation of sewerage, stormwater and drinking water is a big priority. As a town built on gravel and situated between three rivers, our reticulation (the pipes) needs constant monitoring, maintenance and some of it needs replacing.

Sewerage and stormwater pipes under pressure

- Some of our urban sewer pipelines are over 100 years old.
- Stormwater is getting into the sewerage system and putting pressure on the system.
- Council is planning to spend \$15 million over 10 years to reduce cross-contamination of our pipelines.
- Up to half of the private connections to the town sewerage network may need repairs or replacement.

In the *Draft Plan*, we are considering who should pay for costs for the works, which could be up to \$5,000 per affected household.

At Riversdale a new sewerage reticulation, treatment and disposal plant is to be commissioned and at Tinui the old reticulation system needs replacing. Our urban wastewater upgrade is the most ambitious project undertaken yet and our fiscal commitment reflects this. Some \$21 million over the next three years has been budgeted for this upgrade alone. Its implementation, once hearings for consents are complete, will see Masterton's impact on the Ruamahanga River (through our treated effluent disposal) improve.

Quality of drinking water under microscope

Our drinking water quality is also an ongoing priority, with work scheduled on the system mains and trunk line renewals. We will be allowing for health and safety improvements and continuing ongoing work to reduce leaks. We're also looking at filter refurbishment work to ensure the existing plant performs as it should for the next 20 years.



Targeting solid waste and recycling

Plans to improve recycling facilities are underway. There is a question mark over if, or how, to introduce charges for recycling. Like us, other councils are also finding it hard to manage their recycling volumes without considering some form of user-pays.

Where once recycling handling costs were partly offset by prices for on-sold recycling, it is now costing more to have recyclables taken away. Would YOU be prepared to pay for your recycling disposal or do you think rates should cover it?

These are the types of questions the Council considers whenever it faces rising costs for maintaining or improving a service. Likewise with solid waste, the income from rubbish bags, coupled with gate charges at the Nursery Road Transfer Station, are intended to be full user pays, but if volumes drop then fixed costs are not covered. Should a portion of your rates go towards the fixed costs of collecting and disposing of our refuse? Tell us what you think when submission forms go out with the summary of the *Draft Plan*.



Roads and footpaths



- Central government contributes 44% of our total roading costs. The remaining funding is gathered through your rates for the annual maintenance operations and renewals programme, totalling around \$10 million.
- Masterton District has 187kms of footpaths and proposals are being made in the Long-Term Plan about the program to upgrade and maintain our footpaths - and to what level.
- A project to upgrade the CBD footpaths is also planned.
- We are also working towards formalising the *Draft Cycling Strategy*.
- We have 240 bridges to maintain. Of these four are ear-marked for replacement and seven for upgrades.



Parks

Masterton's parks and green spaces are our pride. We're continuing to invest time and money in them, with proposals for:

- Ongoing rejuvenation at Queen Elizabeth Park
- Improvements at Henley Lake
- Renovations to the Memorial Park grandstand
- Support for an all-weather athletics track
- Stage 2 of the Castlepoint Seawall Project

What are your thoughts on these projects? Again, let us know when the *Draft Plan* comes out.

Council Property projects

We've undertaken a building review of the main Council office in Chapel Street and will soon decide how to improve customer service. We currently have a number of our staff off-site due to a lack of office space. The Town Hall stage also needs an upgrade for safety.

Reviewing the rating system

The district rating valuations were released in late 2008 and will be used to allocate the rates in June 2009. There were large variations between properties, some receiving little or no increase, others receiving value increases of 20 to 50%. These variations will mean property rates will change, some up, some down, before any additional rates are added for the 2009/10 financial year.

The Council is also reviewing the rating system, including how much should be charged as flat

amounts per property (uniform annual charges), how much should be based on a property's land and capital value and how costs are divided between the urban and rural areas.

It will be difficult to ensure an even impact of any rates changes because of the revaluation and system changes, but we will try to communicate the proposed changes in as clear a way as possible.

Looking further down the track

The three councils have agreed informally to investigate the feasibility of more joint projects. We could share services more than we do now. What are the benefits and pitfalls of becoming one District or even a unitary authority? You can have your say on this matter when the *Draft Long-Term Plan* is released for consultation next month.

Meantime visit www.mstn.govt.nz for more information on the projects mentioned in this material.

