

## **Corporate Services Chair's Report for August 2006**

Welcome to today's meeting and the start of the 2006/2007 financial year. It promises to be another difficult year as the local economy does it tough and that affects Council, particularly in the areas of resource and building consents. While it will have a negative impact on income it will at least take a bit of pressure off the building inspectors who are working under extremely trying conditions as they deal with the new requirements of the Building Act - more on that later.

The new one-stop-shop appears to be working pretty well with only minor teething problems, as could be expected with such a significant change. These staff also are having to deal with the many frustrations generated by the new Building Act.

Some time ago I mentioned in my report that this Council had before it a number of decisions and processes that both individually and collectively will shape the district for many years to come - probably long after we are on the Council/ Having completed the first LTCCP we are now faced with the Representation Review and the replacement of the Chief Executive Officer, both to be completed over the next 3 to 4 months. It is a huge responsibility to get these two things "right" – a responsibility that I must admit weighs on my mind a lot. They are decisions that have long term effects for the whole district and all its residents and they are a great example of why as Councillors our oath is to serve the whole district, not just the wards that elect us.

Back to the Building Act. I am becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of this on not only the Council but on the community as a whole. I find it ironic to see the government looking at helping people into first homes because of the increasing costs while at the same time dramatically increasing both the costs and the time and effort required to build the said homes. I understand the reason behind the changes but it appears to be like the microchipping - good intentions but while the remedy has significant effects on the whole population it may not deal with the problem areas. There was such an outcry about the dog law yet this Building Act has, in my mind, far greater consequences, will cost people hugely more money and there doesn't appear to be any comment at all. I have heard anecdotally of some horror stories of the costs, the delays, the potential job losses as builders struggle to get certainty of work over coming months, and the increase in unpermitted building as people find the time the paper work takes and the cost unacceptable and just do it anyway. All this indicates to me that there is a major problem that is likely to get worse as the review of the Building Code and the accreditation of builders feeds into the system. I have no problem with certifying builders or tradesmen in general but I am concerned that nothing will be learned from the plumbers situation and the process and the standards required will lead to less builders and another increase in prices.

I then turn on the news and find that parliament spends the day pulling the fingers at each other over yet another personality issue. Now I realise I am standing in a glasshouse as I lob this rock but really is that the most important issue facing the country right now ??

In all this a little more respect for people's intelligence, their ability to make choices and some flexibility would go a long way to addressing the issue that started all this, without penalising the majority of the population.

I am sure you are all glad I am not there to expand on this but I do feel strongly that it is an issue we need to be thinking about.

Tim King  
Chair