

# STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Councillors

**FROM:** Chief Executive

**REFERENCE:** C780

**DATE:** 28 September 2006

**SUBJECT:** CEOs Report for September 2006

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During the last month or so the Chief Executive has spent considerable time involved in discussions/negotiations in the back room involving a whole range of Council potential projects – such as Museum Trust matters, the Trafalgar Park Grandstand development, discussions with central government politicians concerning local government infrastructure costs and possible remedies concerning building consent issues.

## **BUILDING ACT/OVER-REGULATION**

We have recently communicated our concerns regarding the overkill regulation imposed by the new Building Act with our reasons to the Minister for Building Issues, the Honourable Clayton Cosgrove. I attach a copy of our initial letter and his official reply dated 20 September 2006. While we certainly appreciate a prompt reply to our concerns, I am bound to say his answer offers no real suggestions or hope of any way of reducing these regulatory burdens in the future. In fact, the clear inference is that the new heavy handed inspection regime will remain, as will accreditation and all the costs and inspection issues this will entail.

During the month we have had major concerns with staff resources to cope with Building Act requirements. We have had a number of building staff on stress leave from overwork. In spite of a one off working bee outside normal office hours to clear up the backlog, within one month our backlog was just as great as previously experienced. We are currently endeavouring to recruit two additional building inspection staff – if we can find suitable recruits.

We are also carrying out, with the help of a local consultant, a review of the present building consent system with a view to suggesting ways to improve and streamline our system. It has become apparent that in spite of the recent 40% increase in building charges, we are nowhere near recovering the cost of building consents and we will be urgently recommending to Council a further increase and restructuring in building fees.

We will be likely recommending a fee structure more closely related to extra inspection costs and the degree of difficulty of the inspections involved (the old system basically charges a set fee for a certain value of building to be constructed – regardless of its complexity).

This is the biggest single challenge facing the smooth running of Tasman District Council at the moment.

## **UNITARY COUNCIL MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

The four New Zealand unitary councils; Tasman District, Gisborne District, Nelson City and Marlborough District recently had a joint meeting in Nelson of the four management teams. I enclose a copy of the agenda of this meeting which will give Councillors an insight into the wide range of unitary council issues discussed. This was a very useful exchange of ideas.

Tasman District Managers presented two papers, one on the Wai-iti Dam and reticulation system, the second paper concerned the creation of the Community Facilities Rate and recent building of civic assets. Both these innovative developments were of great interest to the other unitary councils.

## **CARPARKING ISSUES**

Ongoing concern for the Chief Executive centres on problems resolving the cumbersome carparking levy formula for the four CBD areas of Tasman District (Richmond, Mapua, Motueka and Takaka). The carparking rules are currently embodied in the District Plan and if rigidly applied, can be a major deterrent to further commercial development. An alternative approach suggested by another of the four unitary councils involves deleting the current carparking requirements for CBD and replacing this Plan requirement with a targeted rate levied on the CBD area to finance carparking/streetscaping projects in the future.

Such a concept would mean that all commercial properties in the CBD would make an annual contribution to the long term development of carparking and streetscaping for the CBD. This matter may be well worth investigating. Some general Council comment is sought on this matter.

R G Dickinson  
Chief Executive

<http://tdctoday:82/Shared Documents/Meetings/Council/Full Council/Reports/2006/RCN061005 Report CEOs.doc>