



HDC NEWS



The New Rating Act What it means to us

The Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 was passed into law on 30 March 2002. It replaces the Rating Powers Act of 1988 as the basis for revenue raising for councils. The majority of the Act comes into force on 1st of July 2003 but there is a lot of work for councils to do to prepare for this.

The purpose of changing the Act was to provide more flexible powers to set rates but it also seeks to ensure that decisions are made in a transparent and consultative manner. The word "transparent" is used frequently today with reference to local government. It simply means that the activities of Council should be open and clear for people to be able to see where money is coming from and going to. The new Act, therefore, focuses quite a lot on the provision of information to enable ratepayers to identify and understand their liability for rates.

There are a few major differences in the new Act from the old one.

Rating units - each separate title or piece of land capable of being sold is regarded as rating unit. If rating units are next to each other and owned by the same person they must be rated by the local authority as if they were one title e.g. two sections alongside each other owned by the same person in town. The difference from the old act is that now farm titles that are owned by different members of the family, even if they are farmed all together as one farm, must be rated separately. This could mean some farms could be paying several UAGCs on their farms. The only way Council could get around this would be to put a remissions policy in place to remit the UAGCs on properties of this type.

Owner liability - Owners, not the occupiers as was the case in the past, are now liable for the rates on their properties. There are a few exceptions, but in general owners must pay the rates and may recover these from their tenants in rent. This could cause some confusion among property owners of multi-tenanted commercial blocks where in the past shop owners have been responsible for rates. Owners of this type of property should check with council well before 1st of July next year to see how the act affects them. We will do a more detailed article on this specific issue later this year.

Targeted rates - The Act gives Councils a new tool to collect rates which allows more flexibility to get those who gain most benefit from a service to pay more directly for that service. A good example would be for the town promotions, which benefit those in the retail trade as they attract more people to town. In the past Council could charge a rate for those businesses in the town centre but these had to be in a contiguous area. There was no provision for the ability to charge restaurants or dairies outside this area who may benefit just as much as those in the town centre.

Council must get certain policies in place before the act comes into force such as a rate remission policy, postponement policy and rate relief on Maori Land policy. These must all be included in the Annual Plan. A rates assessment notice must be sent out to every ratepayer, indicating just how the rates are being assessed and what the money is for. This must go out either before or with your first instalment rates invoice.

Keeping up with the new Regulations

From time to time new regulations on how we are to keep our accounts come into practice just to keep our accounting division on their toes. Recent developments are a new Financial Reporting Standard on accounting for plant, property and equipment which affects revaluations of infrastructural assets and another Financial Reporting Standard on accounting for landfill liabilities. This latter means that we will have to recognise in our financial statements an estimate of the future liabilities associated with landfill closure and monitoring. This will be a difficult exercise and its accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

We are also required now to depreciate heritage items such as statues and art works. We do not have very many of these items and up until now have not depreciated them as we would not replace them if they were to be destroyed. The new requirement to depreciate them means they will have to be valued and their useful life assessed. There is no requirement to fund the depreciation however.

Septic Tanks on the Plains

The issue of septic tank installation on the Plains has reared its head several times recently at council meetings. There have been a number of reports of new systems that comply with new regulations put out by Environment Waikato but that are not working and are causing problems.

Our Council's role in septic tank issues is summarised as follows:

Are on site waste water systems in accordance with Environment Waikato's requirements?

Are buildings and drainage works for which building consent is required built in accordance with the building code? Are existing buildings sanitary?

Is a health nuisance being caused by a malfunctioning waste water system - action required under the Health Act.

Environment Waikato set down criteria, which have to be met, but do not say what system should be used. The object, as far as they are concerned, is to prevent contamination of the ground water. Hauraki made submissions to the draft regional plan of Environment Waikato that the Hauraki Plains was a special case and that the criteria laid down for septic tanks throughout the Waikato were not applicable there. The region, however, did not agree as it says that ground water contamination affects other water-ways and eventually the sea and their regulations are necessary to prevent this. It is therefore important to find systems that comply with the standards and do not cause pollution of the environment.

Investigation into the problems continues. An expert on the subject, Mr Ian Gunn, is to give assistance and a report will come back to Council when there is some result.

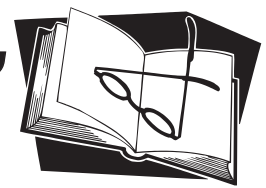


New Paint Jobs

With both Paeroa and Waihi doing work to make their central business districts look more attractive the subject of repainting some of the shops has surfaced several times. As part of the design work there have been suggestions as to colour schemes and calls for private shop fronts to be redecorated. Hauraki District refrained from putting anything about colour schemes in its District Plan. Some councils have been very prescriptive about what colour you can paint, so as to get a particular theme reinforced in a town centre. It was Hauraki's belief that it was up to private individuals to paint their properties but that if the council's part of the town was in good condition, this would encourage other property owners to do something about refreshing the look of their buildings in keeping with the theme.

This has held good so far with a number of owners in Waihi painting important buildings when the streetscape was imminent and completed. Notable was the repainting of the Rob Roy Hotel, which is so noticeable as one enters town. Now in Paeroa, as the Freshlook 2010 gets under way the owners of the Criterion Hotel have done a wonderful job of refitting the outside of their hotel and painted it in tasteful colours. Staff members at the council have commented on how good the hotel looks and we would like to commend the Criterion owners for their initiative. It is to be hoped that other shop owners will follow suit to help lift the town centre appearance as the various stages of Freshlook are completed.

Elected Members' Diary



Week of 29th July to
4th August 2002.

A quiet week for official meetings but some councillors will be at the Local Government Conference on the 29th and 30th whereas others will be involved in functions to entertain and welcome the Chinese delegates from Jiading to our district.

SITUATIONS VACANT



Community Facilities Manager

Hauraki District Council (HDC) is a progressive organisation, with a mission to be a successful and innovative provider of services and facilities for all who live in or visit the district. Encompassing some spectacular scenery, the Hauraki District lies at the base of the Coromandel Peninsula and is bordered on the firth of Thames and the Hauraki Gulf.

HDC is currently seeking to appoint a Community Facilities Manager to join the Community Services Team based in the Paeroa Office. Reporting to the Community Services Manager, the ideal candidate will be experienced in managing facilities, having excellent planning and organisational skills. A sense of humour and the ability to relate to people from all walks of life are also key requirements for this position.

Core duties involve management of:

- * Ward and District Reserves;
- * Council Cemeteries;
- * Other community facilities (ie. Halls, swimming pools and public conveniences).

The position holder will also be required to act as the Council's Field Safety Officer

If you are looking for a challenging but rewarding career opportunity within the Hauraki area, you should obtain the job description and application form from the Council's offices in Paeroa, Ngatea or Waihi, or phone Erin Wood (07) 862 8609, e-mail jobs@hauraki-dc.govt.nz or visit our website www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz to acquire your copy.

Applications close at 4pm on Monday 12th August 2002. Salary will be negotiated with the successful applicant.

Hauraki District Council is an Equal
Opportunity Employer

L D Cavers
General Manager

REMINDER TO DOG OWNERS

This reminder gives you a last opportunity to register your dog(s) before July 31st 2002.

Dogs remaining unregistered after July 31st 2002 will incur substantial penalty fees.

L D Cavers
General Manager

Pursuant to Section 46 of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, public notice is hereby given that the following extra meeting will be held during the month of August 2002.

HEARINGS COMMITTEE
Wednesday 7 August 2002, 9.00 am
Council Chambers, Williams Street,
Paeroa

L D Cavers
GENERAL MANAGER