

Annual Plan consultation delayed to consider COVID-19 impacts



Consultation on the Annual Plan 2020/21 has been delayed to consider changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including options for a lower rates increase, or a rates freeze for the next financial year.

The Council will consider a revised Annual Plan Consultation Document at its meeting on 15 April, to be released for public consultation later this month.

Consultation on the plan was originally scheduled to begin on 3 April, but was deferred so that the Council could consider the impacts of COVID-19 on the community and review its priorities.

The Consultation Document originally proposed an average 3.5% rate increase, in line with the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan, but the Council will now seek public feedback on options to reduce this.

Options could include a rates freeze, with 2020/21 rates held at the same level as the current year, or an increase somewhere between 0% and 3.5%, depending on savings that can be identified.

Selwyn Mayor Sam Broughton says the Council is very mindful of the disruptive effect the pandemic is having on the Selwyn community and economy.

"It's appropriate for us to take another look at our plans and proposals for the coming year," he says. "In light of the pandemic, our focus will change and some of the projects we previously saw as priorities will now be less important.

"We also know that COVID-19 is having a huge impact on households and businesses throughout our district, and we know that many will be facing significant difficulties for some time," he says.

If endorsed by the Council next week, the revised plan and proposed rates freeze would be open for public consultation from 22 April to 22 May.

"It's important that we hear from the community on what level of rates increase is acceptable – keeping in mind that any reductions now may result in catch-up increases in future years."

Rates assistance plan in development

The Council is working on a package of rates assistance measures to help people and businesses facing rates payment challenges due the COVID-19 pandemic.

The assistance package will be discussed at this week's Council meeting and may include reduced penalties for late payment and options around extended payments.

Other options including rates postponement may also be explored in the future.

"As people are struggling it's important for us to do what we can to help," Mayor Sam Broughton says.

"While we need rates income to continue providing essential services, we also need to be compassionate in responding to people's circumstances."

More information on rates assistance will be available later this month.



Library staff calling over-70s to offer support

Selwyn library staff have been phoning more than 1,500 library members over 70 years old offering support during the Level 4 Alert period.

The calls, which began last week, involve staff talking to people who are aged 70 and above who have used a Selwyn Library in the past year. The librarians are offering help to access the wide range of digital resources the library has available. Arts, Culture and Lifelong Learning Manager Nicki Moen says.

"We want to check in with people, to find out if there is anything we can help them with, particularly in terms of library activity. We also want to see if they use technology and, if so, are aware of and are able to use our e-resources, are interested in joining any of our new online programmes and how we can help with that."

The libraries have also set up a team looking at delivering electronic tutorials, she says and will be offering people they call the chance to book a one-on-one tutorial with library staff to help with digital access.

The aim is to provide local support to a priority group identified as more vulnerable at this time.

"Where possible, we have organised the phoning so that a local librarian will phone a local library member. We're excited to be making calls as our librarians are missing their customers, many of whom they might usually see on a weekly or even daily basis."

Staff were enjoying the opportunity and were receiving very positive feedback with people very pleased to get a call, she says and staff intend to stay in contact with library members.



**Be kind,
stay home,
save lives.**



New Zealand Government

Council Call

Selwyn District Council
Norman Kirk Drive, Rolleston
Ph 0800 SELWYN (735 996)

Rolleston Library
Rolleston Drive, Rolleston
Ph 347 2880

Darfield Library & Service Centre
1 South Terrace, Darfield
Ph 318 8338 or 347 2780

Notices

SELWYN AWARDS POSTPONED

The Selwyn Awards has been postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Council intends to run the awards in 2021 and we will be providing further updates later in the year.

Meetings

Council meeting

Wednesday 15 April 2pm

Wednesday 22 April 2pm

Council meetings will be streamed live on facebook.com/SelwynDistrictCouncil

Stories from our household to yours

Part of our ongoing series on how Selwyn residents are handling self-isolation and spending their days. We hope it will inspire you with some ideas.

For Greendale resident Julie Baker, a timetable and some creativity are helping her keep busy in lockdown.

A part-time teacher, Julie found in the absence of teaching she needed something to maintain structure in her life.

“I just thought the only way to cope is to have a timetable, because otherwise it would be like my day off work and I would just sit on the computer until midday in my pyjamas and that’s not going to work every day.”

Julie’s timetable is split into sections; breakfast, animal welfare, fruit break and admin, housekeeping, lunch, well-being, fitness, afternoon tea, garden, home maintenance and dinner.

“I’ve put in everything I have to do in the day, and then usually by the afternoon I’m doing what I want to do, which is weeding. I’m loving getting out there and weeding especially because the sun is out.”

Julie also enjoys the well-being part of her routine at 1.30pm and 7pm, which involves watching television, painting and doing a jigsaw.

“That’s the best bit of the day, when I can do something for myself and I’m allowed to. Having time put aside to yourself is a really good idea and it makes you feel better.”

Julie’s daughter in England has also taken up this well-being idea, inspired by a video chat with her mum.

During housekeeping, Julie uses anything she can find in the garden and pantry to try new recipes saving trips to the supermarket. She has tried her hand at making wine from blackberries, pesto from nettles, bread in a slow cooker and soup from taewa (Māori potatoes).

Soup is one of the easiest things to make from home, mixing vegetables with stock herbs and something to thicken it like potato.

Julie says the only thing that would stop her home grown recipes is zombies.

“My main worry is that we don’t get any zombies, I don’t want any zombies to come pinch all my vegetables!” she laughs.



Lincoln Rotary Club staying active and connected

While some community projects have been put on hold during lockdown period, the Lincoln Rotary Club are doing their best to stay operational and united with their members.

The club have set up a ‘telephone tree’ where one person calls around a group of about six to check each is doing okay and then informs the president Matthew Sullivan of any changes in a member’s health or situation.

The call list includes active members and retired members who have moved out of Rotary.

Public Relations Manager Farhad Dastgheib says it is important for the club to stay connected because it is unknown what is around the corner for each member and it is a reassurance knowing the membership is healthy and going strong.

“Especially since this critical virus is most severe in elderly people and the average age of our club is reasonably high, we need to be careful with some of us.”

The club has also stayed open through meetings over Zoom and through a Facebook group members can join called Rotary Club of Lincoln, NZ.

The club recently received funding from the Ministry of Social Development and contributed 100 food vouchers to Selwyn families who are suffering due to lockdown business redundancies.

It is also collaborating with Rotary Club of Cashmere and encouraging Selwyn residents to donate items to Tonga they may find during a lockdown house tidy.

“I can imagine that people in the Pacific Islands don’t have all the luxury we enjoy here, if there is anything we can do, we will, we should,” Farhad said.

If there are items residents no longer need, they can put it aside and after lockdown period, they can email matt@bradfieldmarketing.com and Lincoln Rotary will come and collect the items to dispatch to Tonga.

These items can include garden tools, particularly hand tools, shoes and sporting footwear (larger sizes preferred), soft toys, gym and fishing equipment, pushchairs, car seats (these can be outside their expiry date as they are used to physically support high needs children in a care facility) and walking frames without wheels.

Community Fund helps Special Olympics make a splash

It’s a Wednesday evening (before the lockdown). Rochelle, Jacob and Amber and other athletes with intellectual disabilities head to the Selwyn Aquatic Centre in Rolleston for their weekly swim lesson.

You can see the excitement and anticipation on the athletes’ faces as they plunge into the water with swim coach Sue who begins the class.

Special Olympics Canterbury reserves two lanes for the athletes with money from the Selwyn Community Fund.

The Council fund supports groups and organisations that contribute to community wellbeing. It is available for Selwyn-based not-for-profit community groups looking to run a project, event, or initiative in the district.

Applications for round two of funding from the Community Fund this year have been extended by one month and now close on 31 May. Apply now at selwyn.govt.nz/selwyncommunityfund.

Swimming instructor Jessica Waters explains advanced swimmers are in the furthest lane, while the middle lane is for those learning to swim fast and the side lane is for recreational swimmers.

In the third lane Amber is showing off her improved breathing technique and freestyle, while Rochelle is training in the second lane for another gold medal at the next Special Olympics’ competition.

Jacob, who is in the side lane, enjoys swimming with his head above the water.

For these athletes, aged 18 to 50, being a part of Special Olympics gives them something to look forward to.

Jeff Waters, Rochelle’s father and chairperson of Special Olympics Canterbury says any money the Special Olympics Group receives goes a long way, but there is more to it than money.

“For us the money is great because it takes some pressure off the athletes and volunteers to raise funds. The majority of our athletes aren’t able to fundraise for themselves and struggle to pay for anything other than the basics.”

Fundraising for training sessions and national competitions is left to a limited group of volunteers.

Mr Waters says the Council funding shows they value Special Olympics’ athletes and volunteers living in Selwyn.

“It just shows that someone else cares. It’s good to feel that you’re not on your own sometimes.”



Council facilities and services

All Council facilities remain closed under COVID-19 Level 4 restrictions.

For updates see selwyn.govt.nz/covid19.