



Selwyn District Council takes consenting challenges head on

Selwyn District Council is implementing effective new processes to handle a record increase in resource consent and engineering applications.

Chief Executive Sharon Mason says the proactive response to handle the increasing demands aims to instil confidence in the council's ability to manage continuing growth.

"Selwyn is the fastest growing district in the country, and it is fair to say that with the increasing applications our team over the past six months has struggled to deliver our consents within the required 20-day timeframes and we understand the frustration this causes in the community," says Mason.

In the six months leading up to July 1, the council received 527 applications, a 48% increase compared to the same period in 2023.

In May alone, the Council approved a record number of 97 consents.

“The approval numbers show that we are adapting well to the growing demand by increasing resourcing and new technology to free up staff from time-consuming administrative duties,” says Mason, who emphasises that consenting fees cover the cost of new staff.

The new technology is part of increased investment in digital solutions in the Long-Term Plan and council is exploring a digital tracking system to provide real-time visibility on each application.

Mason says two spikes in applications before Christmas and before the introduction of the recent Long-Term Plan added significant pressure on the team, as well as the increasing complexity of consents, like multi-unit residential developments.

“They also deal with new legislative requirements under the Partially Operative District Plan and central government policies, like flood hazard resilience and highly productive land, that needs to involve other departments at council to look at the applications.

“Until recently, our team rarely had to worry about these topics for run-of-the-mill applications, and naturally that takes more time.”

Mason is keen to improve the active engagement with builders and developers through regular meetings and the recruitment of two Strategic Relationship Managers, who will work alongside the big developers, businesses and landowners at the early planning stages of new building projects.

“If we can help guide strategic partners through the consenting process and identify potential challenges in the planning stages, we can avoid time-consuming snags during the application and speed up the process for all parties.”

The consents team is planning the first regular meeting with the strategic partners on September 17 at Te Ara Ātea, to get feedback and share what the Council is doing to speed up the consents.

“Aside from the big players, we also want to be more responsive for individual applicants who contact us and provide better end-to-end customer service.

“Many of our staff live in the Selwyn area and are passionate about serving their community. They hear and understand the frustration in the community, so we have a

vested interest in improving our consenting times and instil confidence in our ability to handle the continued growth of the Selwyn District.”

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