

Innovative council cost savings

With pressure on councils across the region to keep their rate increases low this financial year, they are working to make savings across the board.

Council Draft Annual Plans are out for consultation and Wellington City is projecting a rates increase of 2.8 percent. Deputy mayor Ian McKinnon says the council's management board of directors is not getting a pay increase this year.

"People are still struggling and we have asked the CEO to set standards to achieve to.

"Most people feel at this time that lets keep costs as low as possible ... a number of people are still struggling," says Mr McKinnon.

The Councils 200 business units are each required to make 5 percent in savings this year. It is generally up to each unit how they do that, for example not replacing staff if someone leaves, and limiting salary increases.

As chairperson of the Audit & Risk Management committee, Mr McKinnon's job is to make sure council officers are performing to high standards of fiscal responsibility. He says work in the Johnsonville area will make it a "more productive and attractive hub". Investments such as in Keith Spry Pool are intended as long-term savings for the community.

The council has made a number of energy related savings including upgrading their car fleet, and retrofitting the lighting in the Town Hall so that the majority is controlled by occupancy sensors. This saves \$4000 a year in electricity costs.

Current projects include installing new pipes and a control system to the Central Library's heating system. Early tests have shown this has resulted in 10 percent improved energy efficiency.

The public is invited to check out the Councils Draft Annual Plan online or at the council chamber.

Last week the council signed off on funding Mayor Kerry Prendergast \$10,000 to travel to the Shanghai Trade Expo. Mr McKinnon introduced the idea of the Mayor attending and says its money

well spent.

"Ultimately China is an economic power house, and evidence of it's worth is the fact 40 Wellington businesses are attending.

"It will strengthen our economic foundation," he says.

At the Hutt City Council budget managers are expected to manage their units within the rate of inflation and are looking for ways to save money without compromising services.

Hutt City Council CEO Tony Stallinger says a couple of specific cost saving projects were recently implemented including being part of a shared tender for stationary services with other councils across the region.

"We have targeted to reduce energy, electricity and gas, but that is not our biggest chunk of expense.

"Of course we have that drive for being more environmentally responsible," says Mr Stallinger.

Larger savings have been made in tendering for contracts to keep the city's services running, and making businesses compete for projects.

"Last year we had a joint tender with the regions council for insurance.

"There will be a greater focus on working with other councils to make savings, other than doing things on their own," he says.

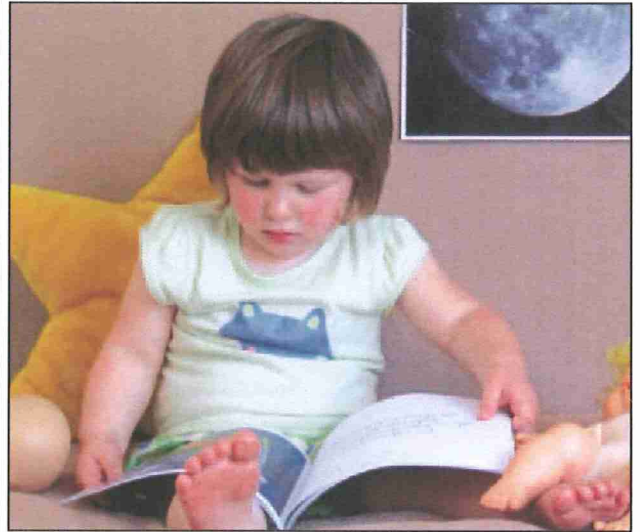
In the last two years the HCC has also tendered for electricity and gas services. The Korohiwa Bus Barn tender was lower than envisioned because the capital project was tendered in a highly competitive environment. The HCC spends a lot of money on the landfill, and with stage one full they have recently opened stage two.

"We have major programmes going to stop so much waste going to the land fill ... we are trying to get businesses to participate," Mr Stallinger says.

The HCC draft annual plan predicts a 2 percent rates increase this year, and he says unless residents "scream they want more services" then increases will continue at the rate of inflation.

2am moon obsession eased by mouse tale

Rochelle Killiner's two year-old daughter Ava is obsessed with the moon.



In an effort to appease Ava's fascination and calm her down for bedtime, Mrs Killiner decided to write a "less scary" children's book.

"She got very obsessed with the moon and stars, she would get out of bed at 2am to go look at it.

"Our home looked like an observatory with pictures of planets all over the place," says Mrs Killiner.

The book 'Goodnight Mouse' is a sweet, rhyming story that was written for her daughter Ava, and is illustrated with images of moons and what occurs at nighttime. During her youth Mrs Killiner used to live in a "creaky little flat above the Fox Brothers Antiques Shop" on the corner of Nelson Street and Jackson Street. To nurture her creative soul she worked as a projectionist at the Lower Hutt cinemas, and nine years ago took up employment in Alicetown.

"I've been into creative writing but

never followed through on anything.

"Our bookshelf was full of children's books more on the scary side, like the Wild Things, this is something more friendly," she says.

Her goal was to publish a book for her daughter as a keepsake, but when she discovered publishme.co.nz other avenues opened up. Her illustrator in Taranaki was employed through the website.

"I heard about the site from a piece on Campbell Live about a lady with obsessive compulsive disorder who could publish her writings on there.

"I did it for myself and my daughter; I never thought it would go anywhere."

1pm-3pm on Sat 15th May the Playdays Toyshop store on Jackson Street will launch her book.

"It was initially intended to be a one off, I've reached my goal and anything more is a bonus," she says.

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