

Tavua Town Council



TAVUA TOWN COUNCIL

P.O Box 532
Tavua, Republic of Fiji.
All Correspondence to be Addressed to the
Chief Executive Officer

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28th March 2022.

Honorable Viam Pillay
Chair Social Affairs Committee.

Dear Sir,

Clarification on Issues Tavua Town Council 2006 – 2014 Annual Reports

We acknowledged receiving your request for clarification issues on the Council's Annual Report for 2006-2014.

Attached herewith please find our response to the clarification sought from the Council.

We submit this for your information please.

Yours sincerely,

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Sailosi Sawana
Chief Executive Officer.

Questions

- 1. What are some of the challenges faced by the Council in meeting its strategic objectives and how is it planning to address these challenges?**

Challenges:

a. Funding – The Council has now charged fees to some of the services which were used to be provided for free. We are now charging fees for site inspection, health inspection, Council's referrals etc. The Council will be proposing for a Garbage Collection fees for Tavua. In addition, the Council has identified a land for its own Carpark. These are some of the additional sources of income to the Council.

b. Technical experts – The Council has engaged in the sharing of resources with Rakiraki Town Council. We have shared the Building Inspector and Health Inspector with Rakiraki. We have also requested assistance from other Municipal Councils like Ba Town Council and Lautoka City Council.

- 2. Inform us of the work the Council has undertaken to address the issue of widespread flooding in Tavua town during adverse weather and why despite such measures, flooding is a recurrent problem in the municipality and its surrounding areas. Can the Council provide us with a strategy to improve the town drainage and consequently reduce flooding?**

A small part of Tavua Town is easily flooded as it is on the bank of Nasivi River. Approximately around 2% of Tavua Town area is usually flooded and is near the Shop and Save Supermarkets. We have been advised by Ministry of Waterways that dredging will start from the Nasivi River mouth. Recently, we experienced a change in weather pattern in Tavua as it felt a lot of rain fall. This also resulted in drains overflow causing flash floods in some parts of the Town. The Council has ensured that drains and chambers are cleaned and FRA has always assisted in the de-silting of earth drains.

- 3. Explain the reasons for the termination of the contracts of certain Councillors for the period from 2006 to 2014.**

No Councilors were terminated. However in 2009 Local Govt Act 125 Section 9A (1), (2) were amended thus the Council was no longer governed by the Councilors and Special Administrators were appointed instead.

4. Provide a breakdown of the following information for each year from 2006 to 2014:

(a) Number of ratepayers; 247

(b) Rates collected for each year (monetary value);

➤ 2006 -	\$62,330.00
➤ 2007 -	\$52,487.00
➤ 2008 -	\$55,374.00
➤ 2009 -	\$74,201.00
➤ 2010 -	\$53,689.00
➤ 2011 -	\$76,267.00
➤ 2012 -	\$56,289.00
➤ 2013 -	\$48,591.00
➤ 2014 -	\$48,591.00

(c) Rates arrears for each year from 2006 to 2014 (provide the monetary value); and

➤ 2006 -	\$25,561.25
➤ 2007 -	\$22,477.56
➤ 2008 -	\$25,144.83
➤ 2009 -	\$25,886.74
➤ 2010 -	\$29,486.51

➤ 2011 -	\$4,473.86
➤ 2012 -	\$6,114.82
➤ 2013 -	\$6,018.49
➤ 2014 -	\$9,898.78

Total arrears up until the present time.

One Property -	\$20,014.68 – vacant and undeveloped
Others -	\$10,507.13
TOTAL -	\$30,521.81

What are the causes of the accumulation of rates arrears?

In 2006 Emperor Gold Mines ceased operations which led to mass migration of Tavua population to other towns in search of employment. Later Emperor Gold Mines Ltd started its operations under new management and trading name as Vatukoula Gold Mining Co Ltd. Due to shut down in EGM's operation led to some of the rate payer's inability to pay their town rates on time.

a. What are the challenges faced in the collection of rental arrears and their method(s) of collection?

- (i) *Vacant land (undeveloped) – Few properties in town boundary are vacant and are located as such where council is not providing any service delivery. It's a challenge for the council to recover the rates for such properties.*
- (ii) *Retired Ratepayers – It's a challenge to recover rates from the retired ratepayers. Council provides part payment terms for such ratepayers.*
- (iii) *Some Properties are under mortgage awaiting for sale after which the banks will settle the rates owing to the Council.*
- (iv) *Council also allowing deduction at source for ratepayers who are employed. This allows the employers to deduct from their employees pay and pay direct to the Council.*

b. **Has the Council conducted a survey or research on the reasons for non-payment or delayed payment of town rates?**

(i) *No research was conducted. However, telephone calls/door to door visitation of rates defaulters were carried out.*

c. **What is the Council's plan to address this issue and what punitive and non-punitive measures are taken against non-compliant rate payers?**

(i) *Deduction at source served to employers for deduction direct from the ratepayers pays if the ratepayer is employed.*

(ii) *Attornment of Lease – notice served to landlords if the ratepayer has given property on rent for the tenant to pay rent direct to the council.*

d. **How is the non-collection of full town rates impacting the service delivery of the Council?**

The Council does not charge separate garbage fee and revenue collected from rates is utilized for service delivery. The council exhausts its resources/revenue in order to provide service to the ratepayers.

e. **Provide details of vacant lots in the municipality.**

(i) NL.25763 BAL RR 429 RR 429 – leased out to Naisara Savenaca (deceased). According to iTLTB there is a new owner but have no details so far.

5. Since the appointment of the Tavua Town Special Administrator in 2019:

a. **What improvements have been brought about in the collection of arrears by the Tavua Town Council? Provide relevant statistics.**

The Council revenue has not change and remains the same. However the Special Administrators always shown their concern on the arrears and provide advice and strategies to reduce the arrears.

- b. What measures have been put in place to promptly address the grievances of ratepayers? How many grievances were recorded from 2006 to date and what were the nature of these complaints?

No of complaints from 2006 till to date - minimum of 120 complaints per year,

Nature of complaints

- Water Seepage from neighbouring compounds
- Sewerage – smell nuisance due to blocked soakage pit
- Stray dogs
- Quality of food in restaurants
- Blocked drains
- Damaged footpaths and Roads
- Streetlights not working
- Noise Nuisance
- Illegal Parking
- Discharge of waste water into other properties
- Overstocking in Market
- Open fire
- Garbage collection
- Water/power shut down in town

- c. How have the following services and facilities provided to ratepayers in the Tavua municipality been enhanced:

- Maintenance of public amenities:

The Council has taken ownership of the public amenities and has a full time attendant looking after it and collecting fees from the public who wishes to use it.

- Rubbish collection and grass cutting:

The Council is collecting rubbish on a regular basis [3 times a week Monday, Wednesday and Friday]. The Council is also collecting rubbish from the rural areas of Tavua including Tavualevu Village, Nabuna Village, Rukuruku, Korovou Village, Yaladro, Masimasi, Lakalaka, Hotspring, Toko, Yasiyasi, Nadolodolo, Natawa, Tagitagi, Qeleta, Matacawa and Balata. The Council is searching for a suitable piece of land for the dumping of rubbish. Grass cutting is also done on a regular basis every 2 weeks.

- Road maintenance and drainage – seeing as certain roads are not maintained on time as evidenced by several potholes forming on roads within the municipality. Flooding of the town and nearby areas is also an issue that hasn't improved over the years.

We continuously liaise with FRA as they are responsible for road maintenance, footpath and drainage.

d. How has service delivery in the following areas been enhanced:

- Health and Hygiene;

Shared services with Rakiraki Town Council

- Security and Safety;

Liaise with Police on security issue and work in partnership with DO's Office, Turaga ni Koros and Advisory Councilors on Community works and bringing up issues that affecting the youths of Tavua.

- Impacts of Climate Change/Environment;

This has affected those in the rural communities [farmers] as they cannot come to town to sell their produce due to floodings. It has also affected the business houses, market vendors and the public alike. The market stall fees are being waived after natural disasters and currently subsidized by Government.

- Poverty;

Poverty has affected the local community with an increase in informal settlements. This has resulted in substandard housing, inadequate nutrition and food security. The Council has liaised with Rotary Club for food hampers to the underprivileged. The Fiji Council of Social Services has also step in to assist the needy as well.

- Squatter Settlements within town boundaries;

There is an increase number of informal Squatter Settlements. The Council is collecting rubbish and also carrying out grass cutting in the settlement

- Disaster Risk Analysis

Our Disaster Management Operation is always activated in November and deactivates in April. We usually conduct house2 house visits, advise business communities of the Cyclone Season and flooding. The Council also undertakes mosquito spraying on the advice of Ministry of Health.

- Gender Mainstreaming:

We are liaising with UN Women who is assisting in gender equality in the Tavua Market. There are more women vendors compared to men.

- e. How has accountability, transparency and good governance at the Council been strengthened seeing as the Committee is yet to receive outstanding Annual Reports of the Council from 2015 to 2020 with the annual audited financial statements?

2015 Annual report has already been audited and submitted to Ministry for Local Govt waiting for parliamentary number before the same is printed and sent to the committee. 2016 and 2017 Financial Statements has been audited and Council is yet to receive a copy. Council has already submitted Financial Statements 2018 and 2019 to the Auditor General's Office for audit.

Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2014

6. As highlighted on pages 25 and 26 of the Annual Report, we note that the auditor issued a qualified audit opinion on the 2014 accounts of the Tavua Town Council based on the six grounds provided. Confirm whether these issues have been resolved and the internal controls put in place to prevent their reoccurrence.

(a) Council is now using MYOB software for accounting purposes. Council has also engaged more qualified staff in accounts dept in order that proper reconciliations and record keeping is maintained.

7. Does the Council have a risk management policy, asset capitalization policy, and disaster recovery plan/business continuity plan to govern aspects of the Council's operations and activities?

Yes. The Management has formulated the above policies for the Council.

8. Provide the current staff structure of the Accounts Section. Indicate the positions, whether they have been substantively filled and the qualification of these Officers.

(a) *Farnaaz Ali – Diploma in Accounting*

(b) *Shalvin Kumar – Degree in Accounting*