



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consolidated Review Report of Tavua Town Council Annual Reports for the Year 2016 - 2018



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 98 of 2024

September 2024

Table of Contents

CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD	3
ACRONYM.....	4
COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS.....	5
RECOMMENDATION	6
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. Committee Procedure.....	6
2. Tavua Town Council	6
2.1. Background.....	6
3. KEY FINDINGS	7
4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS.....	8
5. Sustainable Development Goals	9
7. CONCLUSION	11
COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ SIGNATURE	11
ANNEXURE	12

CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report on the Consolidated Review Report of the *Tavua Town Council 2016-2018 Annual Reports*.

As mandated under Standing Orders 109(2) (b), the Committee looks into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, aviation, culture and media.

The Committee through its mandatory role stipulated under Standing Orders 110, undertook a site visit to the government grants projects administered by the council such as the Tavualevu Village Public Convenience Project and the Multipurpose Sports Court Change room.

The Council raised concerns faced by the Council which have been ongoing from previous years. The Committee noted various issues raised by the Council and provided possible recommendations as well.

The Committee noted the importance of small municipalities like Tavua in engaging with stakeholders to expedite various projects that are being planned to be undertaken by the council for better service to people. The Committee commends the Council for having a good rate collection as compared to other councils.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and management of Tavua Town Council for their timely contribution in this review process.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the former Chairperson of the Committee Hon. Alitia Bainivalu for her leadership and guidance. To the former Committee Members; the Hon. Parveen Bala, alternate members Hon. Ketan Lal and Hon. Penioni Ravunawa for their constructive input and tremendous teamwork, and the Current Committee members for the finalization of this Committee report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament and request that all members of this august house take note of the report.



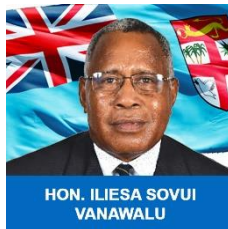
.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

Acronym	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MP	Member of Parliament
SO	Standing Order

COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution and SO 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). The Committee consist of the following members:



Chairperson

Government Member



Deputy Chairperson

Government Member



Member

Government Member



Member

Opposition Member



Member

Opposition Member

RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs conducted the *consolidated* review of *Tavua Town Council for the years 2016- 2018 Annual Reports* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) was referred the *Tavua Town Council Annual Report for the Year 2016* on the 20th of November 2023, and the *Tavua Town Council Annual Report for the year ended on 2017 and 2018* on 15th April 2024.

1.1. Committee Procedure

The former committee held its deliberation and formulation of questions pertaining to the *Tavua Town Council Annual Report for the Year 2016 to 2018* were undertaken. Following this, the Committee conducted a site visit to the Tavua town council's projects the Multi-purpose Sports Court Change room and the Tavualevu Village Public Convenience Project which concluded. It held its public submission at the Garvey Park Hall on 15th May 2024, where the Tavua town council executive management presented its responses. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the current committee compiled its findings and endorsed the report.

The committee received a written response from Tavua Town Council for this annual review. It is available on the Parliament website at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2. Tavua Town Council

2.1. Background

Tavua Town is located 91 kilometers from Nadi and 9 kilometers from the gold mining settlement of Vatukoula. It was formally incorporated as a Town in 1992 and the town covers a land area of 102 square kilometers.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Below are the key findings that the committee compiled through its deliberation and review of Tavua Town Council 2016-2018 annual reports:

- 3.1 The Tavua Town Council has identified a proposed dump site with the necessary feasibility studies to be undertaken.
- 3.2 The public convenience which was funded by Ministry of Housing at Tavualevu village will now open for public use.
- 3.3 Discussions is under way with landowners for land to construct the new Tavua market, car park and bus stand.
- 3.4 The Tavua Town Council wants to reintroduce the business licence for proper monitoring of business.
- 3.5 The Tavua Town Council faces continuous flooding from the Tavua River.
- 3.6 The existing multipurpose court need the installation of flood lights to allow people of Tavua to use the court in the evenings.
- 3.7 The lack of expertise at the council, currently the health inspector, building inspector and the CEO are assigned to both Tavua and Rakiraki Town Council.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon deliberation and review of the annual report, the committee recommends.

- 4.1. Tavua Town council to seek the assistance of the ministry of Environment to carry out the EIA for the proposed dump site.
- 4.2. That a MOU be in place between Tavua Town Council and Tavualevu village committee regarding the operation and maintenance of the public convenience.
- 4.3. That the Council expedite discussions on the land for the construction of a new market, and provision for the car park and bus station.
- 4.4. That the government to provide funding to the ministry of waterways for regular dredging of Nasivi river and to reinstate the annual grant for regular maintenance of the storm/v drains within the municipalities.
- 4.5. That the Ministry of Local Government to assist with funding for the installation of solar flood lights at the multipurpose court.
- 4.6. The Council to improve its rate collection.

5. Sustainable Development Goals

The Council fulfilled 3 of the 17 SDG Goals formulated.

- i. Economic growth – Tavua has a sizeable workforce. There are a few companies operating in Tavua which increases the local labour market such as Fiji Water, Vatukoula Gold Mine and Island Chill to name a few. The Council also create employment in Town through the implementation of the Council projects such as the construction of the Multipurpose Court and Change Room and the Village Public Convenience.
- ii. Social inclusion – provides a venue for sporting activities where the community get together and socialize.
- iii. Environment protection – The upgrade of the Town drainage system reduces storm water effects around Town areas.

6. Committee Public Submission at Garvey Park Hall Tavua



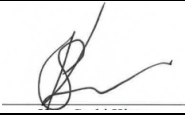




7. CONCLUSION

In this review report, the committee highlighted various areas that needs to be strengthened by the council and relevant recommendations formulated for resolution.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Sashi Kiran Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Ioane Naivalurua Member	
Date: 2 September 2024	

ANNEXURE

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

[VERBATIM REPORT]

ON THE

**MEETING OF THE SELECT
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

ANNUAL REPORT

Tavua Town Council 2016-2018 Annual Reports

INSTITUTION: Tavua Town Council
VENUE: Garvey Park Conference Room, Tavua
DATE: Wednesday, 15th May, 2024

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS
PUBLIC CONSULTATION HELD AT GARVEY PARK CONFERENCE ROOM, ON
WEDNESDAY, 15TH MAY, 2024, AT 10.30 A.M.

Submittee: Tavua Town Council

In Attendance:

1. Mr. Sireli Korovulavula - Special Administrator
 2. Mr. Sailosi Sawana - Chief Executive Officer
 3. Ms. Praveena Prakash - Corporate Manager
 4. Mr. Naelesoni Ravatu - Retired Army Officer
 5. Mr. Rajendra Raghlu - Retired Civil Servant
-

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the Secretariat, ladies and gentlemen; a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone here this morning.

For information purposes, pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament, specifically Standing Order 111, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public, except in few specific circumstances which includes national security measures, third-party confidential information, personal or human resources matters and meetings whereby the Committee deliberates on all issues before it develops its recommendations and reports.

This public hearing, ladies and gentlemen, will be open to the public and media, but for any sensitive information containing this inquiry that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing, at a later date.

At the outset, I wish to remind honourable Members and our delegation from the Tavua Town Council that all questions asked are to be addressed through the Deputy Chairperson. This is a Parliamentary inquiry and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. However, please, note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander of any sort.

In terms of the protocol of this Committee meeting, please, be advised that movement within the meeting room will be restricted, minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode when the meeting is in progress.

[Introduction of Committee Members]

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- The Chairperson of the Committee is still on her way, ladies and gentlemen.

As clearly outlined in Standing Orders 109(2)(b), the Standing Committee on Social Affairs is mandated to look into matters related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs is currently deliberating on the Tavua Town Council 2016 to 2018 Annual Reports and the Committee is here to engage and have a fruitful

discussion with you on the issues and achievements during the reported period, and some of the future plans that the Council has in moving forward.

Honourable Members, before us are the representatives of Tavua Town Council - the CEO and his Team, who are present to make a submission on the Tavua Town Council Annual Report for the year ended 2016 to 2018. All questions are to be directed to the Tavua Town Council once their presentation is completed. The CEO and your team, once you have done with your presentation, we will give time for the honourable Members to ask their questions.

[Prayer by Mr. S. Korovulavula and introduction of Tavua Town Council Officials]

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I stand to be corrected, I believe the Tavua Town Council has the presentation. We will just allow you to make your presentation, after which you can respond to the questions that was sent by the Committee to you. Then we will have questions from the Members of the Committee.

MR. S. SAWANA.- For Tavua Town Council, we have prepared one small presentation, just to update the Committee on the background of Tavua Town Council.

Briefly, Tavua was declared a town on 27th April, 1992, and the current population is 2,650. Our ratepayers have increased to 305 and our business operators is roughly around 205. So, that is the town planning scheme.

Our revenue source is similar to other Councils. We have town rates, market fees and charges, public convenience, garbage fees, rental income, permit fees, PSV base and reserve parking.

On challenges, we still have the old fees and charges. I think our fees and charges was last increased in the 1990s when the Council was declared. We also face a challenge of monitoring business houses in Tavua. So, we would like to propose the introduction of business licence and also salary and wages for Mayors and Councilors, CEO, Health Inspectors and Building Inspectors. The proposed new minimum wage rate will also be a challenge for the Council.

Just for your information, Sir, this year, our budgeted total revenue is just a small amount of \$412,759. The forecasted expenditure is \$425,906 with a deficit of \$13,147. Our major creditor is the Office of the Auditor-General with an outstanding of \$38,000 audit fees.

On Town rates, the category of rates in the Tavua Town Council are as follows:

Category	No. of Ratepayers
Residential	169
Commercial	102
Industrial	2
Special	5
Rural	1
Open Space	5
Civic	24
Commercial Development	3

So, with the collection, 203 ratepayers managed to pay their rates in full, there were 101 defaulters and two on part payment.

Deputy Chairperson, Tavua Town Council has much better record on the rates collection, compared to other Councils. Right now, we have 70 percent rate collection compared to other Councils, so around 30 percent is our arrears. Currently on arrangement, those ratepayers find it difficult to pay town rates. The Council is offering instalment payments via direct deposit to our ANZ or BSP account, direct deduction from salaries and wages and any other formal agreements for instalments.

Below are the enforcement challenges:

1. Meeting the cost of garbage collection. Before, Tavua Town Council was the only Council that do not charge any garbage fee. I think last year, we started to charge business communities for garbage fee - collecting fees from the business commune. Because they are not paying any business licence, we started to charge them the garbage fees. Deputy Chairperson, for our ratepayers compared to ratepayers in other Councils, we have not charged them any garbage fees.
2. Roadside loitering.
3. Traffic Management.

Yellow Bin, we have been installing 10 litre bins around town. One of our challenges is the current bins. Right now, all types of rubbish are dumped into the bin. Some of the bins that were recently installed around town are damaged. Sir, the Council, together with the assistance from the Golden Water Carnival installed 10 litre bins around town.

On market challenges, Tavua is one of the three towns that still has the old market, apart from Sigatoka and Labasa. The current Tavua market is an old structure. Challenges are as follows:

1. Review of stall fees - the last review was done in 2007 but the old fees that we have now is the bus entry fee which is still 12 cents per entry, in comparison to the current first stage bus fare which is more than a dollar.
2. Demand for stalls - There is a demand for stalls in the market. Unfortunately, there are limited stalls.

The Council is also in discussion to acquire a piece of land but, fortunately, we have opened a discussion again with the landowners to construct a new market.

Roof leakages - Since the current market is old and the roof is leaking, our proposal is to construct a market shed for casual vendors.

One of our challenges also is overcrowding and random stealing of produce from the market.

On Health Department, for your record, Sir, we have recorded one case of leptospirosis, eight cases of dengue fever and Tavua experienced four floodings this year.

Below are health challenges:

1. Littering - As I have mentioned before, littering is one of our health challenges. Fortunately, we managed to train some of our officers to become our anti-littering officers.
2. Wastewater discharge into Council drains - This is also one of our challenges. Similar to other small Councils, the Tavua Town Council does not have any sewerage system so they

have their own discharge pit. However, some people discharge wastewater into the Council drainage.

3. Stray dogs.
4. Uncleanliness of the town.

Below are our achievements so far:

1. New Twin Cab - Last year and this year, we have managed to obtain two new twin-cabs.
2. Compactor Truck – This is a gift from the Indian High Commission - a nine-tonne compactor truck which is now in operation.
3. Children's Park upgrade - The Council managed to acquire a grant of around \$65,000 from the Fiji Water Foundation. The Children's Park is to be upgraded to be a family park. We have got space for a children's park, an open space for family gathering or for senior citizens.
4. We have also installed solar streetlights around dark areas.

On capital projects, as we have mentioned, for the upgrade of the Children Park, we have received \$63,000 from Fiji Water Foundation and we have completed around 99 percent of the work on the Park.

On Tavua Car Park, we have also surveyed for rezoning. So, the consent for rezoning has been submitted to the Ministry of Lands.

On the maintenance of Tavua Market, we have submitted proposals for maintenance of the Tavua Market of around \$77,000. Unfortunately, this year, there is no funding from the UN Women and we had then submitted a proposal for Government assistance.

On the new Tavua Dump Site, it is the same dump site that we had identified for Rakiraki. We have requested JICA and UNDP for EIA assistance and also to the Ministry of Local Government.

On the new Tavua Market land to construct the new market, we have noted that it is not only for the population of Tavua District, but other provinces are using the Tavua Market - the people from Ra, Naitasiri, Wainibuka, Tailevu and Ba, who all travel to Tavua. So, there is a need to construct a new market. Now, we are opening discussions again with the landowners to acquire a piece of land.

The next slide shows the piece of land that we are trying to acquire from the landowner. The old market is the one with the biggest roof top. So, the blue boundary is for the new market land that we are trying to acquire.

Other projects include the Tavua Car Park along Vatukoula Road, with the orange boundary, as well as the Tavua rubbish dump where we had identified two areas - Rabulu and Nadelei. The map shows the area that we have identified in Rabulu.

One of the challenges is the increase in operational cost. We have noted that after COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increase in operational cost, not only by the Council but also experienced by all businesses.

So, way forward is to increase all council fees. We have submitted our proposal for an increase in the council fees. It is still pending with the Ministry of Local Government. Also, if there is an assistance may be from Government to assist small Councils, like Tavua Town Council.

Businesses are not properly monitored since the repeal of the business licence, so the only way forward is to reintroduce the business licence. One of our other proposals is for SMEs with the threshold of around \$450,000, not to pay business licence. We will also agree to any recommendation as to whatever amount should be paid by small business operators.

One of our challenges is that we do not have any dumpsite for Tavua Town Council at the moment. Initially, we were dumping with the Ba Town Council but since I became the CEO for both Councils, Tavua now is also dumping at the Rakiraki Dump. So, we have identified two dumpsites in Tavua for dumping rubbish.

Another challenge is the lack of expertise. We are currently sharing the Rakiraki Town Council Health Inspector, Building Inspector and the CEO..

In conclusion, Tavua has the capacity to grow but has not really developed well. Government can assist in the development through the acquisition of land for development and assistance in the Council's operation. Proper investments in the right place will save activities and development in Tavua.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I take this time to welcome our Chairperson, honourable Alitia Bainivalu, and I will now handover to her. For the purpose of our inquiry, you may still proceed with the responses to the questions that was sent by the Committee.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you for your presentation and good morning to the staff of Tavua Town Council. My sincere apologies for coming in late this morning, as I was travelling from the village and a few of the bridges were flooded due to heavy rain this morning. So, I sincerely apologise for that.

MR. S. SAWANA.- I will now continue with the responses from Tavua Town Council on the questions that were forward to us for the 2016-2018 Annual Report.

Question No. 1

In terms of the operations of the Municipality, what was achieved during the years under review? What was not achieved? How could this be improved in the future?

Tavua is a small town with limited revenue base which is a challenge to the Council in realizing long term and short term goals. However, the Council, with the assistance from Government, has been able to achieve few income-generating projects, for example, the Multipurpose Sports Court Changeroom and maintenance/upgrading works at Garvey Park.

In addition, the Council has been able to provide clean and safe environment for community prosperity, even though some of the fees and charges have not been increased in the last 20 years. Improvements could be achieved if the Council has a healthy cashflow through the review of fees and charges.

Question No. 2

What was the targeted outputs (in terms of services provided) and what was the percentage achieved during the year under review?

Targeted outputs were to provide clean and safe environment for Tavua community and to provide sporting facilities. The Council has achieved 70 percent to 80 percent of the targeted outputs. This has not been only achieved in the year under review, but over the years since inception.

The Council provides the following facilities:

- Multipurpose Sports Court and Changeroom;
- Tavualevu Village Public Convenience; and
- Garvey Park – facility for sporting activities, events, carnivals, et cetera.

Question No. 3

What were some of the weaknesses and challenges of the Municipality? What were some areas of opportunities?

WEAKNESSES And CHALLENGES	STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Corporate Plan
	IT	No website
	Finance	Cashflow
	Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrendered Lease of properties • Retiree ratepayers • Senior citizens ratepayers
	Business Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of business houses • Non-compliance with OHS and NFA requirements
	Market	No business licence.
	Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs maintenance
	PSV Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base fees increase
	Garbage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garbage fees arrears
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
OPPORTUNITY	General	Creation of a Council website for ease of dissemination and accessing of information by our stakeholders
	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase fees and charges • Introduce a threshold if business license is to be introduced

Initially, there was a challenge for the Council. We have managed to prepare our Strategic Plan and Corporate Plan.

For IT, we still do not have any website. Finance is always a challenge for the Council. We have always had financial difficulties in the Council since the removal of the business licence.

Rates is also one of our challenge since we have retiree ratepayers, senior citizen ratepayers and surrender of properties.

One of our challenges also is the monitoring of business houses. What we have noted is that, there is non-compliance with OHS and NFA requirements since there was no business licence.

The market is also a challenge for the Council. It is an old market, was as had been mentioned during our presentation, and it badly needs maintenance. In saying that, we have noted that a lot of our women vendors face difficulties during the bad weather in Tavua. They used to sell in the open place but they get wet all the time. Even the tables of some of our permanent vendors get wet during bad weather since the Market roof is badly leaking.

For PSV operators, there was never a change in fees so we have submitted a new proposal to increase base fees.

Garbage, we still have garbage fees arrears and it is a challenge for the Council.

There is opportunity for the general creation of the Council's website for ease of dissemination and accessing information by our stakeholders and the public.

On finance, there is a need to increase fees and charges and to introduce a threshold, if business licence is to be introduced.

Question No. 4

What is the progress of all capital projects initiated in the years under review?

1. Multipurpose Sports Courts Changeroom
Completed and is being utilised when sports are being organised at the Court. It was well kept by the Council and used for some other purposes, such as screening patients during COVID-19, as well as cancer screening for women organized by NGOs.
2. Tavualevu Village Public Convenience
It was also completed and handed over to Tavualevu Village.
3. Garvey Park Maintenance and Repairs
Garvey Park was extensively damaged during *TC Winston*. The repairs to the pavilion, fencing of Garvey Park and eight floodlights were installed. The Park is generating revenue for the Council.

Question No. 5

In terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), how is it relevant and achieved during the years under review?

The Council fulfilled three out of the 17 SDGs formulated for the new millennium which are as follows:

1. Economic growth - Tavua has a sizeable workforce. There are a few companies operating in Tavua, such as Fiji Water, Vatukoula Gold Mine and Island Chill, to name a few, which increases the local labour market. The Council also create employment in town through the implementation of the Council projects, such as the construction of the Multipurpose Court and Change Room, and the Village Public Convenience.

2. Social inclusion - provides venue for sporting activities where the community get together and socialize.
3. Environment protection - the upgrade of the Town drainage system reduces the effect of stormwater around town areas.

Question No. 6

What are some of the strategies put in place to address pending arrears?

Collection of outstanding rates is always a challenge. The Council has put in place the following strategies for collection:

- Encourages payment arrangement to those who are finding it difficult to pay;
- House to house visitation;
- Phone calls;
- Viber message;
- Small Claims Tribunal; and
- Magistrates Court.

Question No. 7

What is the Town Council doing to ensure that there is a timely collection of town rates on an annual basis and arrears and at the same time reducing expenses?

The Council promoted 7 percent rates discount for rate payment within the first month of the financial year. Thereafter, it allows 5 percent discount for all rates received during the second month of the financial year. The discount allowed timely collection of town rates.

About 40 percent of the current rates were received in the first two months. The Council also conducts ratepayers' meetings where the importance of rates collection is re-emphasized to all ratepayers.

Question No. 8

Can the Council update the Committee on the plans in place to mitigate the flooding in your Municipality?

Tavua Town is located in a flood prone area and the Town entrance near the Tavualevu Bridge is always flooded whenever there is continuous heavy rain, thus closing traffic along the Kings Road. The Council has raised its concerns and has requested the Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Waterways for the dredging of Nasivi River. At times, the portion of the Town was also flooded due to blocked drains and chambers whereby the Council deploys workers to remove debris from the drainage system.

Question No. 9

What changes/processes and procedures improvement has the Council put in place to correct failures and weaknesses and prevent any recurrences? How will the Council ensure that these changes/processes and procedures are strictly followed?

Decision making - the Council appointed committees to look into specific areas, like projects, developments, processes, et cetera. Some proposals are implemented immediately while others are submitted to the Special Administrator for approval.

Finance - the Council has a Finance Manual and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which it follows to ensure that the Council's finances are effectively and economically utilized.

Human Resources - the Council has a HR Manual and HR Processes. The Council has adopted the Open Merit Recruitment System to ensure that all engagements are merit-based.

Question No. 10

How has the Council, in consultation with the Ministry of Local Government, streamlined the process of obtaining approval and what is the timeline for rezoning and subdivision of land?

Rezoning - Three months and two weeks. The Council lodges applications to Director Town and Country Planning within two weeks and it takes up to three months to complete the processing.

Subdivision (more than 5 acres) is lodged with the Council and less than five acres is directly lodged to Director Town and Country Planning by the applicant or consultants. Time frame is six to seven months. Within two weeks, the Council lodges application with the Director Town and Country Planning.

Question No. 11

How is the Council dealing with complaints from ratepayers?

The Council has a Complaint Management System whereby complaints are to be resolved within 24 hours. In the event where a complaint is not resolved within 24 hours, it is immediately referred to a senior officer for investigation and possible meeting with the relevant committee for a solution. For other complaints, that is the responsibility of another agency because it is not an official complaint. But the Council will step in to assist by re-directing the complainant to the relevant agency.

Those are the responses to the questions that you have sent to the Council. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I will now open the floor for questions. My first question is on the new dumpsite. You mentioned that the new dumpsite that you have identified is the same as Rakiraki. That means that Rakiraki and Tavua will have the same dumpsite? Just a clarification, Sir.

MR. S. SAWANA.- Initially, Tavua was given to take the lead role in acquiring the piece of land and that is what we have communicated to the Ministry of Local Government. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is also aware of this.

The Ministry has a plan that there will be a landfill somewhere between Lautoka and Nadi. There will be a collection point from all the small Councils. So, if that plan does not go ahead, the current dumpsite we have identified for the Tavua Town Council will be shared with Rakiraki Town Council.

HON. P.K. BALA.- From the presentation, which Park is funded by Fiji Water?

MR. S. SAWANA.- The Children Park, Sir, near the hotel.

HON. P.K. BALA.- The one which was done by Supreme...

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes.

HON. P.K. BALA.- I know about Tavua and Rakiraki. To say that there will be a collection point between Lautoka and Nadi, that is something to be seen, but the Committee strongly feels and what we have heard yesterday from your good self that Rabulu is a location for the site that has been identified. We, the Committee, strongly feel that considering Rakiraki and Tavua been small Town Councils, it is only advisable that both Councils use that same location. I mean, afterall, Tavua was using Ba so why can there not be a central dumpsite for Rakiraki and Tavua?

As far as we are concerned, the Committee is also taking into account how Fiji is being rated in regards to climate change and environment. We are champions and I think smaller councils need to be assisted. Yesterday, I have suggested to the CEO that you people should seek some assistance from the Ministry of Environment in regard to EIA and definitely, that can be one of the assistance that can be provided by them.

The other thing that I had observed is the extended boundary. You have talked about the extended boundary. In 2018, I believe, there were funds given by Government to service the extended boundary. Is that fund been given this year?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes, Sir, the fund continues to be given.

HON. P.K. BALA.- The same amount?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes. Before it used to be \$50,000, now it is \$40,000.

HON. P.K. BALA.- No, but the report says otherwise. The report says in 14.4 - extended town area, \$7,500 was given in 2018.

MS. R. PRAKASH.- That was initial one that was received, but this year, we received \$40,000.

HON. P.K. BALA.- For that extended boundary?

MS. R. PRAKASH.- Yes, extended boundary.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Is this for the collection of rubbish?

MS. R. PRAKASH.- Yes, for the extended boundary that is outside the town boundary.

HON. P.K. BALA.- We have been hearing this and it was also in the news, about the development of the market and bus station. This is a very old story. I know that there were some court cases in regards to that, is this the land that you are talking about, next to the market or behind the market?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes.

HON. P.K. BALA.- So, CEO, you have mentioned in your presentation that you have renewed the negotiation. So, what is the real talk that is going on? I mean, there is no point telling us that you have opened up a discussion, considering what has happened in past. So, is there any serious talk or any serious negotiation going on, or is it just for the Council to tell us that there has been some talks?

The reason why we are saying that is because Tavua definitely lacks a good market and a bus station. You have talked about increasing the fee for bus companies, but where is your bus stand? We, as a Committee, will really want to know about the serious talks that you are doing, whether they are willing to give or not, so that Committee can also recommend to the line Ministry that if that fails, what is the next option because all these years, we were in dark. We were relying on them and then later on, we found out that there is a court case between the two *mataqali*.

MR. S. SAWANA.- The acquiring of this piece of land has been a challenge for the Council. You will be well aware that the Council, for the past 20 years, have been trying to acquire this piece of land. There has been some differences within the *mataqali*, and we have also asked iTLTB if we could apply for that piece of land. The iTLTB has advised the Council that they have already received two applications - one application is in process and the other is pending, and they cannot receive our application which is the third application.

The first application that has been processed, there has been a delay from iTLTB, so the applicant has taken iTLTB to Court. We started having discussions with the applicant this year and he has advised us that there is a possibility of outside of court settlement with iTLTB. He has already agreed to sell that piece of land to the Council. The Council will lease that piece of land.

HON. P.K. BALA.- So, what is the total acres?

MR. S. SAWANA.- It is around 4 acres.

MR. S. KOROVULAVULA.- If I may offer some assistance, the land is about 4 acres to 5 acres. The member of the Land Owning Unit who is on the site has an agricultural lease. One of the pieces of land. The other piece of land, the agriculture lease, it has been declared by the court that it belongs to him. There is another piece of land that he is occupying on beneficial occupation under some section of the Native Land Trust Act. That too is with him. But for us to acquire that, we need to get the approval of the Land Owning Unit which is *Mataqali Tilivasewa*, the chiefly *Mataqali* in Tavua. The issue with them is that there are two factions. One is led by this Mr. Bari, and the other is led by another group. Both of them are trying to get that piece of land so that they can develop it. They have different plans.

The issue with them is that this land is native reserve. Now, for native reserve to be leased, it needs to be de-reserved. This *mataqali* has three *tokatoka* (sub-clans). One of the *tokatoka* has got about 500 members, another one has got about 300 members and another has about 50. So, we will be dealing with approval from close to about 500 to 600 members to be approved before it can be de-reserved, and then we will deal with the lease later. I hope you can imagine the task that is ahead. We already have two factions, then there is the issue of getting the numbers in. But there is still some chance of getting this but it is the most drastic one and, that is, compulsory acquisition through the Lands Department.

Honourable Members of the Committee, I hope we will keep it as our very last resort. We are, sort of, making headway right now and we want to take it before we explore the other extreme measure.

HON. P.K. BALA.- In your response we can see that you have talked about three capital projects that was undertaken by Tavua Town Council, what is the current capital development that has been undertaken, if any?

MR. S. SAWANA.- For the current development project, currently we do not have any major project. The only project that we have is the upgrade of the Children's Park. We have planned for the maintenance and upgrade of the Tavua Market, but that is also delayed just because of funding issues.

HON. P.K. BALA.- So, in another words, what you are saying is that there were no applications done to the Ministry of Local Government to access funding from the Challenge Fund?

MR. S. SAWANA.- I think way back in 2019 or 2020, there was a fund set aside to acquire piece of land. Since there was no development, the fund was withdrawn. Like what I have initially mentioned, we had hoped that UN Women might interfere and provide funding for the market maintenance but we have been advised there is no funding from them and this year, we have submitted to the Ministry of Local Government.

HON. P.K. BALA.- I also observed in your response, this is just a matter of interest, in Question No. 9, you are saying that the Council appointed a committee to look into specific areas. What are these Committees? Under what provisions are these committees being appointed and who are the members of these committees?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Through you, Madam Chairperson, the Committee is made up of Head of Departments..

HON. P.K. BALA.- Within the Council?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes, within the Council.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Your stakeholders are the ratepayers and most of the time, we receive complaints. You have mentioned over here that the Council has a Complaint Management System. Can you just briefly highlight on this, what is this system about? How do you manage this?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Madam Chairperson, through you, the Council has a Complaint Management System whereby we record all the complaints in our Complaints Register. Any complaint that is dealt with is immediately forwarded to the relevant HOD or officer for investigation and further action.

Most of the complaints that we have received, we have managed to resolve them immediately and we also reviewed all the complaints during our monthly meeting whereby the head of the committee and Special Administrators are updated on the complaints - those that have been resolved, those unresolved and the reasons for unresolved complaints. For those that we are not able to handle, we redirect them to the relevant agency, for example, complaints on roads are redirected to Fiji Roads Authority (FRA), complaints on water are redirected to Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), et cetera.

HON. P.K. BALA.- The reason why I raised that is because we can take something from Tavua to other Councils as well. What we have observed is that, you people are better off in collecting rates, compared to other Councils.

My last question, Madam Chairperson, we have seen that you were given \$100,000 for drainage project in 2019. Is this the regular funding to the Council or that was just a one off case, or whether you have received it this year as well?

MS. P. PRAKASH.- That was received from theb of Waterways for the upgrade of drainage.

HON. P.K. BALA.- So, this for year, you have not receive any funding?

MS. P. PRAKASH.- No, it was a one-off.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Chairperson, without the funding, how are you managing the drainage? CEO, is there any work going on in regards to dredging of rivers and creeks, as you are also facing flooding in Tavua?

MR. R. RAGHLU.- I think it is a very good question. That is a challenge for us, the maintenance of storm drains in Tavua. The funding is not coming from anywhere else but it is just within our budget, which is from the collection of rates. Wherever the drain is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Waterways, then we refer it to the Ministry of Waterways, especially the openings towards the river and the sea.

As far as dredging is concerned, it is a concern. It has been raised on many occasions. Almost in every meeting with the Ministries, we are raising this issue for the dredging of the Nasivi River. This is a matter of urgency. Although the whole of Navua Town is not flooded, but the entrance after the bridge end before the bridge, the whole area gets flooded. Honourable Bala is very familiar with that. The whole of Yaladro and Nabuna get flooded and before Shop n Save right up to the bus stand, the road is blocked. Villages that also get flooded are Nabuna, Tavualevu, Vanuakula and Rukuruku. We have always been raising this issue but the promises were made and so far, nothing has eventuated. Just last year, there was a little bit of cleaning of the main bridge with a digger, but what we require is a dredger.

MR. S. SAWANA.- If I may add, Madam Chairperson, there is a challenge in addressing this flooding issue, especially when there are different agencies responsible for drainage, like the Ministry of Waterways for all rivers and creeks, FRA for road drains and the Council for Council drains. So, all these fall into different agencies and they are responsible for the cleaning of drains, especially the ones that run along the town.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Firstly, with regard to your response to Question No.6, as I asked your good self yesterday regarding the Small Claims Tribunal and Magistrates Court. Do you have matters before the Small Claims Tribunal and Magistrates Court?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Sir, that is one of our strategies. We have not taken ratepayers to the Small Claims Tribunal or Magistrates Court.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- So, it may be used in case....

MR. S. SAWANA.- Yes.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- I am looking at the 2018 Report and the 2017 Report of Tavua Town Council. This is on Page 19 of 2018 Reports and Page 21 of 2017 Report. Are there any allocations from Government grants? For 2017, you allocated \$19,000 for heritage park and 2018, again, you allocated \$20,000 for heritage park. Is this the same park?

MS. P. PRAKASH.- Yes, the same.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- What is the current status of that park now?

MS. P. PRAKASH.- Some of the amenities are still there and some were blown away during cyclone.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- I am just asking this because this is after cyclone year, it is 2017 and 2018. So you were given \$19,000 for heritage park - 2017 and 2018 as well. Is it completed?

MS. P. PRAKASH.- Yes, but due to *TC Winston*, part of it was damaged. The project was left like that and it was not completed.

MR. S. SAWANA.- Madam Chairperson, if I may add, park was completed. What we have noted is that, it had been vandalised by drunkards. Most of the time, youths have been using it for their drinking parties. It is near the hospital. We have complained to the relevant authorities but we were not receiving any relevant assistance. We have also noted that some of the structures on the park has corroded very badly and some of the *bures* were damaged, so the Council have decided to convert that to be the senior citizens park, which will be a third phase from the current upgrade of the Children's Park.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- CEO, how are you funding that - the conversion?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Currently, we have received the first funding from Fiji Water Foundation and the Council has agreed that for this coming financial year, to apply for the second phase to the Fiji Water Foundation.

Fiji Water Foundation always opened its window of request for assistance from August to September. So, we are targeting that time to apply for assistance from the Fiji Water Foundation.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Your expected time of completion should this funding go through, when do you expect this to be done? Are you expecting this to be done next year? How many phases are you planning for this conversion?

MR. S. SAWANA.- The current phase is for one year so the next phase will also be approximately one year.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Thank you very much for the clarification. I do not have any further questions, but just want to thank the Council for their presentation. You have been very good so far and with regards to what honourable Bala has said, you will be a very good example once we go ahead and look at other Town Councils.

A recommendation from my part with regards to the dumpsite, just listening to the explanation, it is a very difficult issue that you will try and partake, given the politics of the *vanua* in there. I would suggest, CEO, for you to try and find an alternative, given that Tavua has been declared a town and there is no dumpsite.

There are a lot of mechanisms in place, even the Court. My suggestion would be to find an alternative, just for the time being because it has been a long time. As you have alluded to, I wish the talks go well and that comes in favour of the Council but if it is not and we come again next year with the same thing, in my opinion, we are basically just wasting time. It is rather we go and look for another alternative.

Also, with your approval, CEO, if we can have a copy of your presentation. It will be a huge help for us with our recommendation to Parliament with regards to some of the assistance that Tavua Town Council needs.

My final one, I am not sure whether Vatukoula is doing very well in the Skipper Cup and most probably, they will go up. I came in this morning, I was standing outside taking pictures of Garvey Park. You know you have to prepare well, the status of the ground, the facilities, because you will be having a lot of revenue since Vatukoula will be coming up and most probably, games will be played here. So, just a recommendation for you. For Skipper Cup, most probably Vatukoula is going to go up, so you need a small upgrade for preparation because revenue will be coming in. Just a few recommendations, CEO.

MR. S. KOROVULAVULA.- Madam Chairperson, the issue that was raised by the honourable Ratu Vakalalabure, the dumpsite is a different issue to the market. It is mainly the issue of the landowning unit. For the dumpsite, there is one that was described by our CEO that is in Rabulu and another one is at Nadelei. The one in Rabulu is a freehold land and Nadelei is an agriculture State lease. It is also a very attractive site because it is quite far from the population and it is not close to the water source. That is another one that we are exploring. Right now, we have already prepared our EIA screening application and we are just waiting for the lessees to come up with an issue we have with the Department of Lands before we can continue with that, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- In regards to the site at the back of the market, listening to all the discussions, I think it is very difficult and that place has been holding some major developments, as far as Tavua is concerned. It has been ongoing for so long. So, are there any other plans, locations, or even plan B if you are not able to negotiate it in regards to the initial plan?

The landowners also have their own plans. It is an ongoing discussion. The Council also has a development plan for projects. If negotiations was done before what plans you will have if this discussion is not successful? Is there any Plan B or any other place identified for such projects?

MR. R. RAGHLU.- Plan B, there is an offer that has come to the Council by another *mataqali*, that is after Tavua College - the area from there to Yasiyasi. On the left, the Housing Authority has done some developments behind Tavua Primary School. After that, from Tavua College, the offer has come to us so we are keeping that as second option. If this does not eventuate, like the talks so far seems to be quite positive, but hopefully, we are very optimistic about it. If that works out, so much the better and if not, then obviously Plan B is to explore - the other area which an offer from the other *mataqali*.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Madam Chairperson, can I assist in this. You know, I can recall Praveena, there was already a subdivision plan done for that area. If you want it, you can access it through the Department of Town and Country Planning. It is where the market will be, where the bus station will be, the rezoning that took place. So, if you can follow up on that, but first things first. You have to resolve with the *mataqali*, that is the main thing.

We are a bit concerned, in the sense that it has take you that long with this. That is why we are asking for Plan B because this thing had been coming in your report as well. I know, I have seen that, and that is why I am saying that there is already the rezoning plan that was done - already marked where the market and the bus station will be.

Madam Chairperson, my last question, you have talked about extended town boundary. Is this a separate ward or is it going to be merged with the existing wards?

MR. S. SAWANA.- Madam Chairperson, through you, currently, we just have one town boundary. So, the proposal has been submitted to the Town Council Committee and they have advised us to conduct consultation with the residents of Yasiyasi area. So, that is the area that we want to extend and include in the town boundary. Currently, they are not included in the town boundary - they are part of the extended boundary.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- What measures does the Council have in place to ensure the timely submission of your Annual Reports? I note that we are discussing 2016 to 2018.

MR. S. SAWANA.- Madam Chairperson, we have prepared 2019 to 2020 and we will submit it to the Ministry of Local Government and to Parliament.

MS. P. PRAKASH.- There have been a delay in submitting from year 2006. So, from then onwards, we have been compiling and updating our reports. So far, we have updated till 2018. We already have 2019 and 2020 in process and we will submit it shortly.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I would like to thank the CEO of Tavua Town Council and members of your team for your presentation to us this morning. The Committee has noted some issues and challenges that are currently faced by the Council. We will definitely take note and then take it up to the relevant line Ministry and also have that in our Committee Report.

We hope that in future, if we have any further questions, your office is open to accommodate the Committee in this regard. *Vinaka Vakalevu* and have a blessed day.

The Committee adjourned at 11.30 a.m.

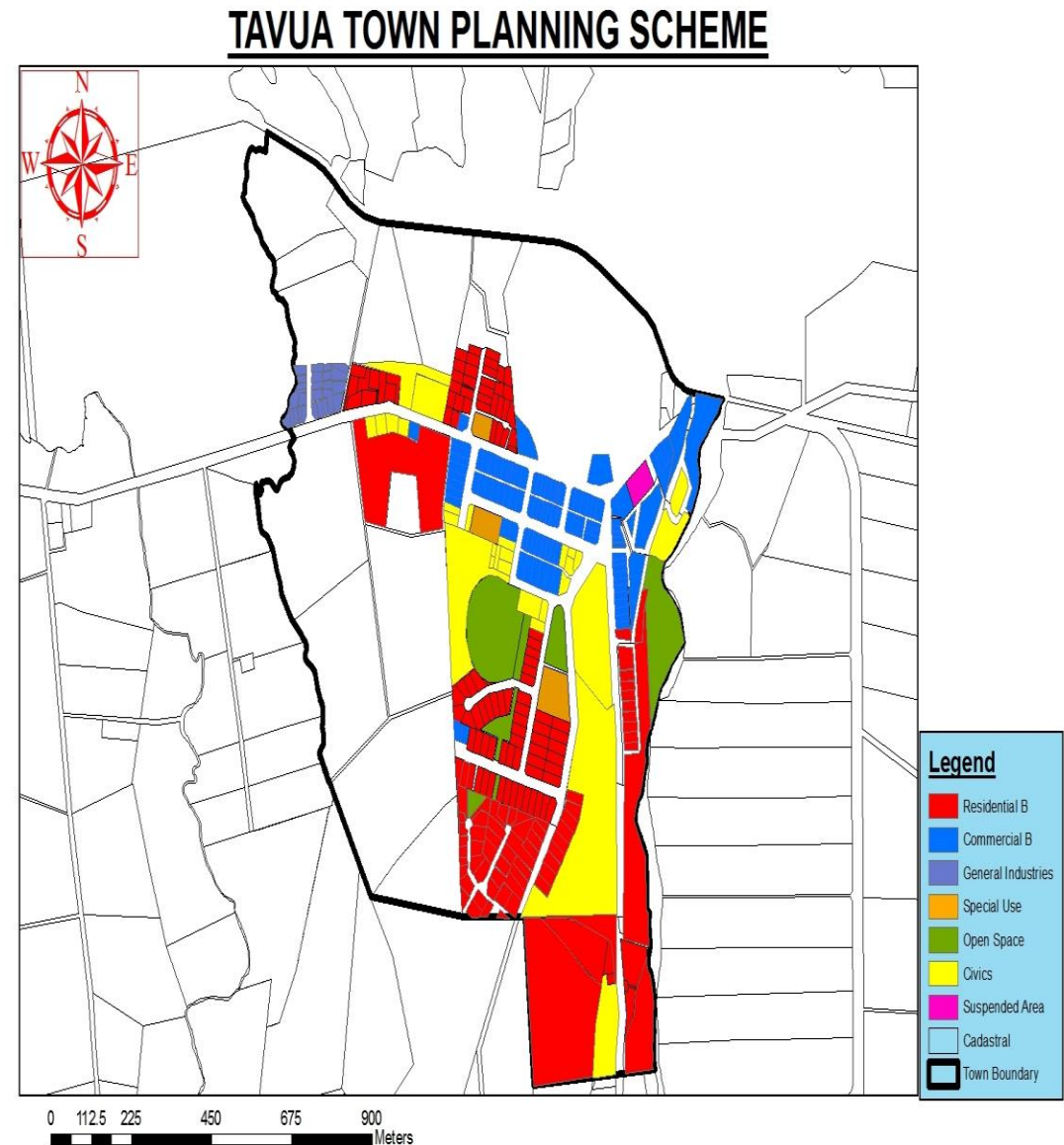


SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTATION

Garvey Park Hall

Brief Background

- Tavua was declared a town on 27th April 1992.
- Tavua Population: 2,650
- Ratepayers: 305
- Business Operators: 205



CASH FLOWS

REVENUE RESOURCE

1. Town Rates
2. Market fees and charges
3. Public Convenience fees
4. Garbage fees
5. Rental Income
6. Permit fees
7. Taxi/Carrier/Bus/Minibus base
8. Reserve Parking

CHALLENGES

1. Fees and Charges
2. Re-introduction of Business License
3. Salaries and Wages:
 - Mayor and Councilors
 - CEO
 - Health Inspectors
 - Building Inspectors
 - Proposed new Minimum Wage Rate

Finances

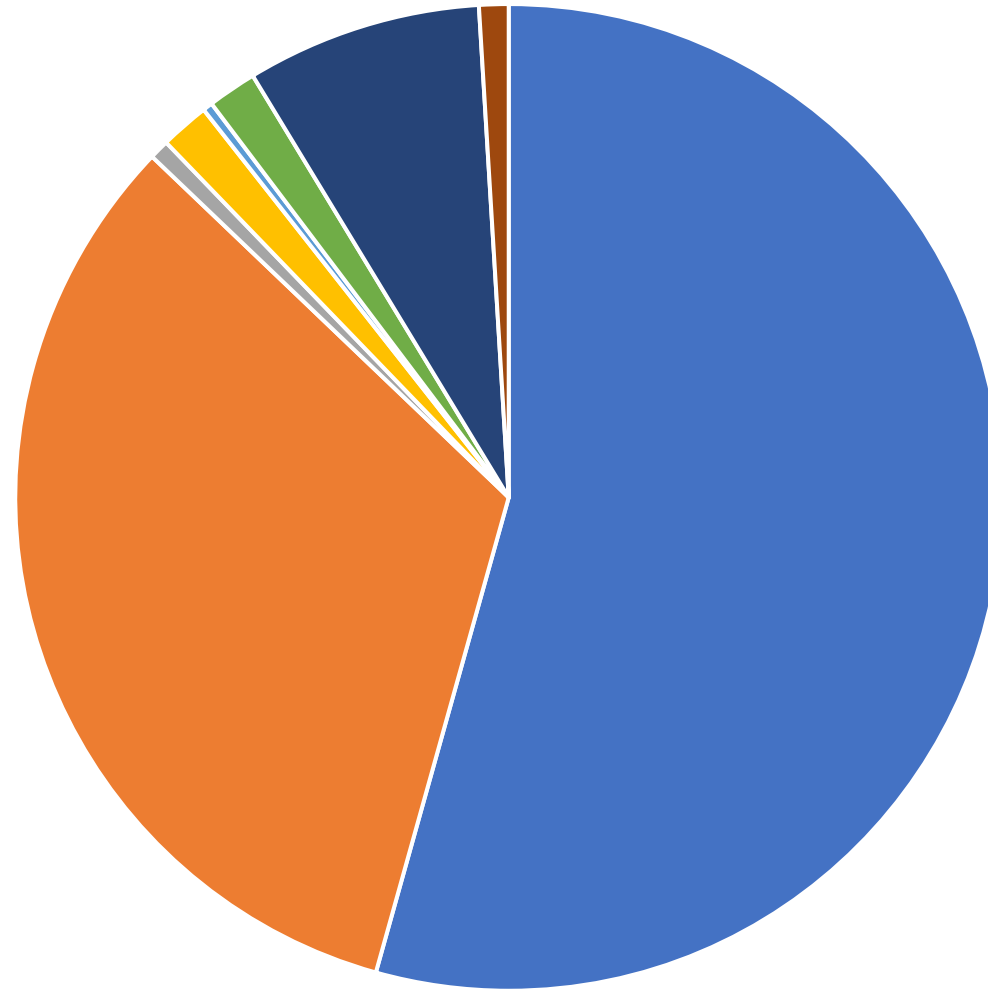
	Budget	Actual	Balance
Total Revenue	\$ 412,759.00	\$ 251,119.00	\$ 161,640.00
Total Expenditure	\$ 425,906.00	\$ 277,596.00	\$ 148,310.00
Net	-\$ 13,147.00	-\$ 26,477.00	\$ 13,330.00

- Major creditor = \$38,000 OAG fees

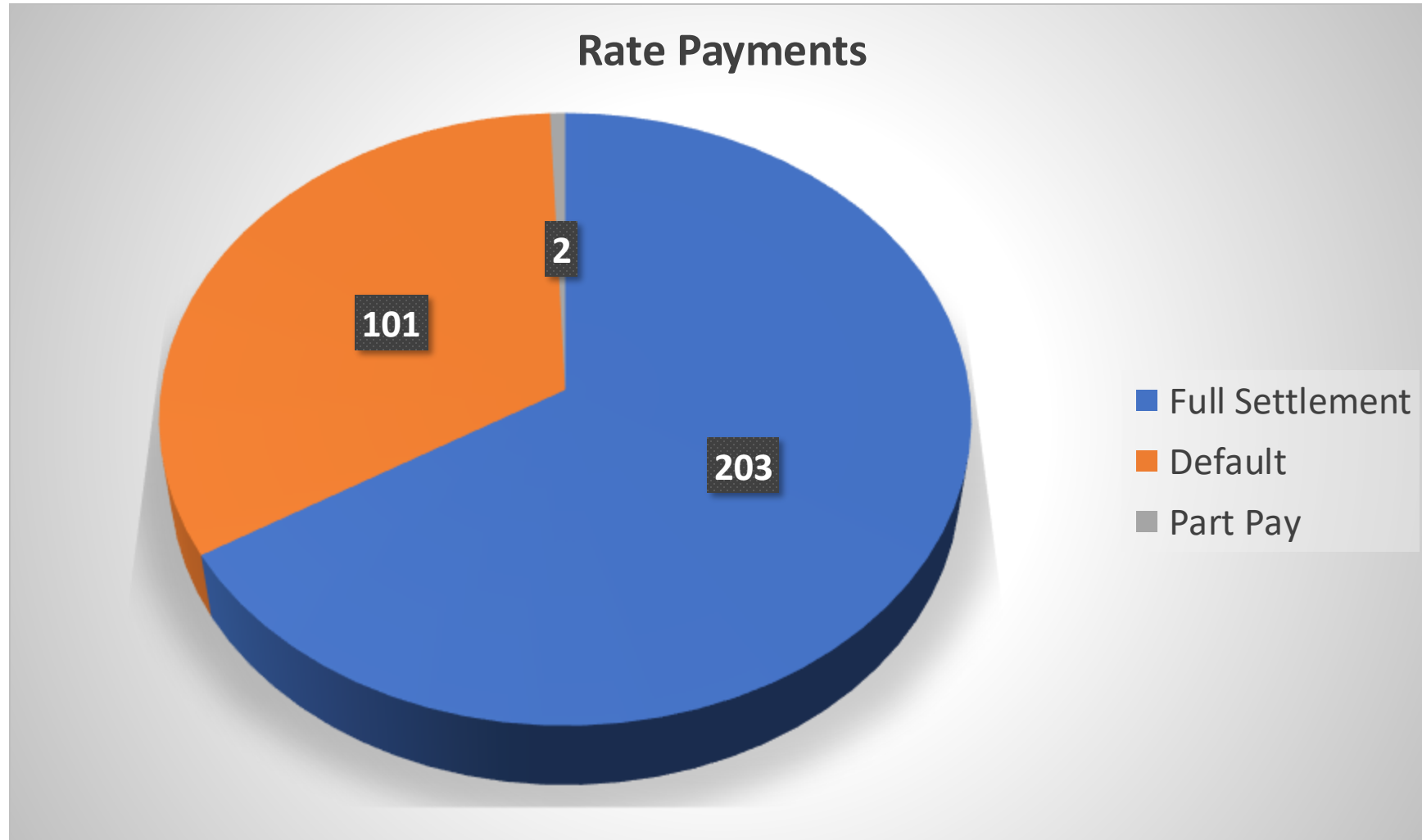
TOWN RATES

RATES CATEGORIES

- Residential 169
- Commercial 102
- Industrial 2
- Special 5
- Rural 1
- Open Space 5
- Civic 24
- Comm Develop 3



RATES COLLECTION



ARRANGEMENTS FOR PAYMENTS OF TOWN RATES

Those Ratepayers finding it difficulties to pay Town Rates, council is offering:

- Installment Payments
- Direct deposit to council ANZ or BSP account
- Direct deduction from the salary or wages
- Formal agreement for installments.

Enforcement Challenges

- Meeting the cost of garbage collection
 - Roadside littering
 - Traffic management.
- Install Litter Bins



MARKET CHALLENGES

- Stall fees review (2007)
- Market old structure
- Demand for stalls
- Land issue
- Roof leakages
- Market shed for casual vendors
- Overcrowding and stealing



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

LTD Cases

- Leptospirosis – 1 case
- Typhoid – nil
- Dengue – 8 cases

2024 flooding = 4

Health Challenges

- Littering
- Waste water discharge into Council drains
- Stray dogs
- Town Cleanliness

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. New Twin Cab
2. Compactor Truck
3. Children's Park Upgrade
4. Installation of Solar Streetlights
5. 10 Litter bins

Capital Projects

- **Tavua Town Council**
- **1. Upgrade Children's Park \$63,000**
- Submit request to Fiji Water Foundation.
- **2. Tavua Car Park**
- Surveyed for rezoning. Consent for rezoning submitted to ML.
- **3. Tavua Market Maintenance \$77,000**
- Submit proposal to UN Women for maintenance of market cost \$77,000.
- **4. New Tavua Dump Site**
- Request JICA and UNDP for EIA assistance.
- **5. New Tavua Market Land**
- 20 years attempting to acquire a piece of land.



New Tavua Market Land



Other projects

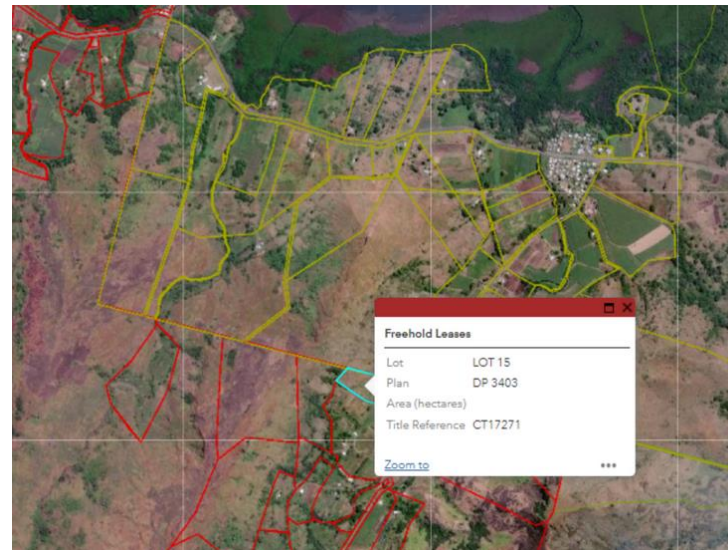
TAVUA CAR PARK

- Surveyed
- Consent for rezoning



TAVUA RUBBISH DUMP

- 2 sites identified
 - a. Rabulu – freehold land
 - b. Nadelei – state land
- Wrote to JICA and UNDP



CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

- Increase in operational cost.
 - ☐ Increase all Council fees.
 - ☐ Government assistance
- Businesses are not properly monitored (License repealed)
 - ☐ Re-introduce Business License.
- No dumpsite
 - ☐ 2 Sites identified.
- Lack of expertise
 - ☐ Sharing Health Inspector, Building Inspector and CEO with Rakiraki.

Conclusion

- Tavua has the capacity to grow but has not develop really well. Government can initiate development through the acquisition of land for development and assistance for Council's operations.
- Proper investments in the right places will see a burst of activities and developments in Tavua.

THANK YOU