



# JOHN ROBSON on Tauranga City Council...

Within weeks of being elected, I saw signs of operational issues at Tauranga City Council.

These included:

- The poor state of the staff working environment - a stark contrast with the Mayor's and CE's soon-upgraded reception area,
- Windows XP (a 12 year-old operating system) on the computer screen in the Councillors' lounge,
- And a somewhat inconsistent and incoherent induction programme.

As I engaged in the 2014/15 Annual Plan budgeting process, it was clear there was no coherent strategy informing the decision-making.

The last time I had seen such a strategy vacuum was last century – in General Motors – and that lack of strategy ultimately led to General Motors' bankruptcy.

But Councils don't go bankrupt – they just take more money from ratepayers.

The budgeting process confirmed problems with the 'management information system' – updating numbers

in the budget required a high level of manual intervention which was slow, resource-intensive and introduced risk of error.

All add to cost.

There was also evidence of 'advocacy' - instead of receiving objective information, there was bias – an obvious example being the 'political' labelling of budget options that were put before Councillors.

Without a clear strategy – and quality information – decisions to allocate resources will be compromised.

And you will not get what the Local Government Act says you have a right to – an effective and efficient Council.

The strategy and associated operational issues were, in my professional opinion, self-evident – sadly, it took over a year before these issues were openly acknowledged – in report DC186 - which should have made the front page of the Bay of Plenty Times.

But didn't

Next week – what was in DC186?

*John Robson*