

# Kit's off home to Kawhia

AFTER 30 years of serving his community through local government, Kit Jeffries signed off this month.

Mr Jeffries, who started his local government career as a borough councillor in Marton in 1984, officially left the office on July 11.

For the past four years he was Waitomo District Council's corporate services manager, but also spent a good part of his local body career at Otorohanga District Council – serving the district he calls home.

He was born in Taihape in 1948, at a time when, like many rural towns on the main trunk line, it was a popular "pie and railway cup of coffee" stop with thriving local businesses, farms and mills.

He recalls the town (population 3000) boasted two picture theatres, two hotels, the Cascade brewery, two workingmen's clubs, three rugby clubs, two cricket clubs, tennis, squash, bowls, croquet, a strong athletics club, a musicians' club, Lions, Rotary, Jaycees and an excellent A&P show.

He particularly recalls farming families coming to town for late night shopping on Fridays.

"Dad would call into stock firms and get stock and produce needs sorted before heading off for a beer with his farming mates at a local watering hole," says Mr Jeffries.

"Mum would get the shopping done, and then catch up with her friends on local happenings while us kids went to the pictures – one shilling (10 cents) to get in and sixpence (five cents) for an ice cream and a gobstopper. Magic days!"

**MUSICAL TALENT**

With a lifelong interest in music as a drummer and singer, he started a small music group at Otorohanga College in the late 1990s, which eventually became a 30-piece orchestra.

Due to his encouraging students to explore their talents, music was added to the college's curriculum and a fulltime teacher appointed.

"It was very satisfying seeing so many younger people picking up and playing an instrument and I'm pleased many of them continue today," he says.

Locals will have often seen Mr Jeffries playing the bugle at the region's ANZAC services.

While some may associate Mr Jeffries solely with local government, he has had a myriad of career changes outside council corridors – bank accountant, taxation accountant, fast food outlet owner, fresh

fish retailer, BYO restaurateur, tree pruning and even worked briefly at the Tux dog biscuit factory.

"I believed then, as I still do, that if you're prepared to work and give anything a go there is a job out there waiting for you," he says.

He was the financial accountant of Otorohanga District Council from 1985-1990, then joined Waitomo District Council as finance manager from 1990-97, before serving as support services executive and acting chief executive for three years.

Eight years as chief financial officer, company secretary and acting chief executive of Hamilton International Airport followed, then two with Inframax Construction in Te Kuiti as finance manager.

In 2010, he returned to the WDC as corporate services group manager.

Mr Jeffries' community interests have included the Otorohanga Community Board, Beattie Community Trust, Otorohanga Community Planning Group, Otorohanga Support House, Otorohanga Bowling Club, Otorohanga College board of governors and board of trustees and the Shearing Capital Promotions Trust, Te Kuiti.

**RETIREMENT 'HOME'**

Now that he's retired, Mr Jeffries and his wife Dianne intend living in Kawhia permanently.

It's a part of the North King Country that's very dear to their hearts.

"My personal interest in Kawhia extends back over 40 years when we were reunited with extended family on my mother's side," he says.

"Being of Ngati Hikairo descent, our family has a long association with Kawhia and we can trace our whakapapa back to Hoturoa, captain of the *Tainui* canoe."

He says Kawhia has had a significant influence on his life and it is logical to "return home".

"It's a magic spot and our own family has grown up with a similar sense of belonging and pride in Kawhia."

Mr Jeffries chairs the Kawhia Community Board and Kawhia Community Projects Trust.

He plans to keep busy with the couple's four sons, 10 grandchildren, travel, fishing, motorcycling, golf, Kawhia community affairs, "finishing off" the Kawhia house, running their Kawhia rental holiday home and doing a spot of home brewing.

"But I call that living," . . . he smiles . . . "not retirement."



**SIGNED OFF:** Waitomo District Council's corporate services manager Kit Jeffries of Otorohanga retired this month to spend more time with his family at Kawhia after a 30-year association with local government.

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