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Funds for merger research



John Cousins

TAURANGA City Council has agreed to contribute nearly \$150,000 to a research project with the potential to reshape local government in the Bay of Plenty.

The \$500,000 project has already drawn funding promises totalling \$100,000 from the Western Bay and Whakatane district councils, with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Rotorua, Opotiki and Kawerau left to decide.

Tauranga's share of the investigation phase of the project was decided by a vote of 9-1 yesterday, with Councillor Catherine Stewart opposing.

Mayor Stuart Crosby said a

robust investigation would provide the evidence needed for the second stage of the project to consider reorganisation options.

It also meant the councils would not be caught short by the 20-day deadline to respond to applications lodged with the Local Government Commission.

He was referring to the high-powered group of Tauranga men spearheading an application to have a single council covering the whole of the Western Bay. They propose a "simple amalgamation" in which the Western Bay District Council bolted on to the Tauranga City Council.

However, doubt now surrounded an assurance that they would stop work on their application until the reorganisation report was finished.

A letter from Paul Adams, John Gordon and Graeme Horsley to the mayors of Tauranga and the Western Bay said

Funding for Local Government Reorganisation Investigation

- Tauranga City Council: \$143,500
- Bay of Plenty Regional Council: \$134,000
- Western Bay District Council: \$57,500
- Rotorua \$86,100
- Eastern Bay councils: \$61,300
- Taupo and South Waikato: \$16,700

their activity appeared to have prompted the regional council to commission a report on the reorganisation of local government in the Bay.

The August 28 letter said they had been given an assur-

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ance that they could make a private presentation to the authors of the report.

The letter said it seemed inevitable that the Western Bay and Tauranga councils would be required to come together in some form.

When the *Bay of Plenty Times* sought comment yesterday on the men agreeing to halt their application for amalgamation, Mr Gordon expressed surprise at the June timing for the completion of the joint councils' research.

He said his agreement to halt the application had been linked to the prompt completion of the report.

Contact us

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