



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consolidated Review Report of the Nasinu Town Council 2011- 2017 Annual Reports



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CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs report on *the Consolidated Review Report of Nasinu Town Council 2011-2017 Annual Reports*.

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

The Committee reviewed the Annual Reports and identified important issues, which were then brought to the attention of Nasinu Town Council for their necessary action.

Apart from its primary function of collecting rates and providing services to ratepayers, the Nasinu Town Council now faces many other challenges. These include the drug situation, the town security situation, and the increase of informal settlements within the municipality.

The Committee is of the view that, given the current situation, the municipal council must review its functions and operational procedures as a matter of urgency to address the serious issues within the municipality.

The Committee commends Nasinu Town Council's future plans to make Nasinu a Smart and Sustainable City by 2030 and promote sustainable development in all projects and policies in alignment with the National Development Plan (NDP) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Local Government must guide and oversee the Council’s operations, compliance, operational efficiency, and effectiveness.

I would like to sincerely thank the Special Administrators, the Acting CEO of Nasinu Town Council and his team, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, and her officials for their valuable contributions to this review process.

Finally, I would like to thank the current and former Hon. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Sashi Kiran, Hon. Ioane Naivalurua, Hon. Viam Pillay, and Hon. Parveen Bala for their valuable input and support. I would also like to thank Hon. Taito Rokomatu, Hon. Joseph Nand, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, and Hon. Shalen Kumar for their assistance on several occasions as alternate standing committee members.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

Acronym	
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
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 consists of the following members:



HON. ILIESA SOVUI
VANAWALU

Chairperson

Government Member



HON. RATU RAKUITA
S. VAKALALABURE

Deputy Chairperson

Government Member



HON. VIAM PILLAY

Opposition Member



HON. TAITO ROKOMATU

Interim Alternative Member

Government Member



HON. PARVEEN KUMAR

Opposition Member

1. INTRODUCTION

Nasinu Town Council Annual Reports 2011 to 2017 was tabled in Parliament on 15th April 2024 and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Standing Orders 109 (2)(b) allows the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture and media.

1.1. Committee Procedures

Deliberations on Nasinu Town Council began in late October 2024. The Committee read through the reports and prepared clarifications on key issues of interest, which were then sent to Nasinu Town Council.

The Committee held a Public Submission with Nasinu Town Council on 5th November 2024.

Upon receipt of all relevant information on the committee's queries, it was subsequently endorsed on 11th March 2025.

The Committee received the responses from Nasinu Town Council, which can be viewed at the following link. <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2. NASINU TOWN COUNCIL

2.1 Background

Nasinu was formally incorporated a Town in the year 2000. It is the largest municipal area in Fiji with its land areas of 78.3km, which is twice the size of Suva, and is nestled along Suva – Nausori corridor stretching from Samabula (4 miles) Bridge, at the junction of Wainivula Road, and Nokonoko (Bailey) Bridge to 9 miles Wainibuku Bridge and along Khalsa Road to the junction of Kanace Road.

The population of Naisnu is 92,043 [census 2017]. It is home to approximately 14,000 squatter residents in 50 different informal settlements.

The Town boundary is divided into 7 wards with total rateable properties of around 11,819 official ratepayers and is expected to increase due to the upgrade of informal settlements at Vatoa and Omkar.

The 7 wards are as follows:

- ward 1 – Makoi, Tuirara & Tovata
- Ward 2 – Valelevu, Naveiwakau, Kalabu & Newtown
- Ward 3 – Caubati
- Ward 4 – Narere, Navosai & Muanikoso
- Ward 5 – Laucala Beach Estate & Kinoya
- Ward 6 – Nadera
- Ward 7 – Nadawa, Nasole and Nepani.

The Council provides the following services:

- Garbage Collection,
- Building/Subdivision/Rezoning applications,
- Health Service (Inspection),
- Maintenance of roadside drains
- Grass cutting, repairs and maintenance of streetlights, and market licensing.

The Nasinu Municipality is the fastest-growing urban center, and like the other municipalities, it faces the same social challenges but on a bigger scale.

2.2 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

The committee noted and deliberated on Nasinu Town Council's undertaking to improve its operations and service delivery.

- The Committee noted that for the period under review, 2011-2017, the Auditor-General gave unqualified opinions for all the years. The Committee considers this as a serious state of financial affairs, and it is evident that Nasinu Town Council has failed to comply with the relevant financial regulations.
- The Committee is also of the view that the Ministry of Local Government has failed to provide an effective oversight for those years over the financial affairs of the Council.
- The committee commends the Council's Strategic Plan to transform Nasinu into a smart, sustainable city by 2030.
- It is also crucial to review the relevant legislation and regulations to empower Nasinu Town Council.
- The Committee noted that there are cases pending investigation before the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC).

3. KEY FINDINGS

Below are the key findings that the committee compiled through its deliberations.

- 3.1 Review of Legislations:** The Committee noted that the Local Government Act needs to be reviewed to better control the activities in all municipalities.
- 3.2 Financial Management:** The Committee noted that Nasinu Town Council did not observe the proper accounting protocols for the period under review. Nasinu Town Council has implemented a Finance Manual and departmental SOPs for each of the accounting functions and has strict check and review measures in place.
- 3.3 Rate Arrears:** The Committee noted the increase in rate arrears as of 31 October 2024, which stood at 16.6 million. Nasinu Town Council has taken measures to address these issues with the Courts at the small claims tribunal and other strategies for the payment of town rates.
- 3.4 Proposed Developments:** The Committee was informed of the proposed developments in Nasinu Municipality and the need for proper infrastructure.
- 3.5 Status of Recreational Parks:** The Committee noted that the Nasinu Town Council has 34 open spaces. The council is looking at plans to utilize these open spaces for parks and other recreational purposes.
- 3.6 Natural and Man-Made Disaster Risk Plan:** The Committee noted that the Council does not have an existing Disaster Risk Management Plan. The Council, with other stakeholders, is in the process of formulating a draft Disaster Risk Management Plan for the Council.
- 3.7 Collaboration and Networking:** The Committee noted that the Ministry of Local Government and the Councils need to improve their coordination and collaboration to improve service delivery. The Council must establish its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and strengthen its network with other key agencies.
- 3.8 Security Plan for the Council:**

The Committee noted that with the rise of crimes within the municipality, there needs to be a Plan for a more secure, safer, peaceful and welcoming environment for the municipality. The Council is developing a security plan to address the security issues.
- 3.9 Informal Settlement:** The Committee noted that Nasinu is a fast-growing municipality. This growth has resulted in informal settlements. Nasinu has 50 informal settlements. The Council has identified urban villages in these informal settlements.
- 3.10 Solid Waste Management:** The Committee noted the council's issues with solid waste. Nasinu Town Council is improving enforcement of illegal dumping and introducing solar-powered CCTV monitoring devices to curb this issue.

3.11 Fight against Drugs: The Committee noted that the council has no effective strategy and plans to address the fight against drugs within the Nasinu municipality. The fight against drugs requires closer collaboration with key stakeholders. The Council has an MOU with the Fiji Police, and discussions are on installing CCTV cameras at hot spots.

3.12 Standardized Reporting and Pending of Annual Reports: The Committee scrutinizes the reports of municipalities and noted the inconsistency of the Annual Reports format. Nasinu Town Council is working with the Ministry of Local Government to improve its reporting format process and procedures.

3.13 Staff Retention: The Committee noted the high staff turnover due to the high salaries offered for the same positions elsewhere. The Council is undertaking a Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE), doing the right form of recruitment, and doing succession planning to resolve these issues.

3.14 Monitoring and Oversight: The Committee noted the lack of proper oversight and monitoring from the Ministry of Local Government.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends the following:

- 4.1 That Ministry of Local Government urgently expedites the review of Local Government legislation.
- 4.2 That Nasinu Town Council take measures to fully comply with the financial regulations and procedures to meet standards from the Auditor General's Office.
- 4.3 That Ministry of Local Government strengthen its oversight and monitoring for all municipalities.
- 4.4 The Committee supports the Nasinu Town Council's efforts to reduce its outstanding rate arrears through various legal means.
- 4.5 The Committee strongly recommends that Nasinu Town Council should have a Disaster Risk Management Plan in place pursuant to the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024.
- 4.6 That Nasinu Town Council must review its staff retention policy to empower its workforce to meet the challenges of the changing times.
- 4.7 For a safer, secure, and clean town, the Committee strongly recommends that the Nasinu Town Council must strengthen its collaborations and network with stakeholders and agencies to effectively confront social issues like drugs, loitering, informal settlements and other criminal activities.
- 4.8 Nasinu Town Council to work closely with Ministry of Local Government regarding developments in line with the proposed Master plan.
- 4.9 Nasinu Town Council is to collaborate with all the key stakeholders, especially the Water Authority of Fiji, Energy Fiji Limited, Fiji Roads Authority and Telecom Fiji Limited to commence the Lyndhurst Project at the Kalabu Tax Free Zone.
- 4.10 The Committee recommends that Nasinu Town Council prioritize the urgent recruitment to fill in vacant positions.

- 4.11 Nasinu Town Council must work with the Ministry of Local Government and Housing to formalise the Informal settlements and also for the Council to work the Ministry of Itaukei Affairs for the development of urban villages within the municipality.
- 4.12 The Council must have a timeline plan for all the development projects recommended in this report.

5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GENDER ANALYSIS:

Nasinu Town Council's commitment to the SDGs are as follows:

1. SDG 5 - Gender Equality, promoting gender representation and inclusivity in community projects and decision-making.
2. SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy, expanding solar panel installations and community solar projects. The Council are setting up solar lights within the communities for safeguarding of women and children.
3. SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, advancing technology-driven solutions for infrastructure and public services.
4. SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, transforming Nasinu into a smart sustainable urban centre by 2030. The vision for the future is to transform Nasinu into a smart sustainable city with the utilisation of technology and innovation for public service improvement.
5. SDG 13 - Climate Action, the implementation of solar energy, climate-resilient buildings and eco-friendly practices.






6. CONCLUSION

Nasinu is the fastest-growing municipality with major residential, commercial and industrial zones. With the rapid expansion of Nasinu Municipality there is a need for proper monitoring and resources to accommodate its increasing population.

The Committee, after having reviewed Nasinu Town Council's Consolidated Reports is of the view that the directions and plans set by the council must adhere to strict timelines.

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. Taito Rokomatu Alternative Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Parveen Bala Member	
Date: 11 th March 2025	

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/>

Brief Profile of Nasinu Town Council



- Proclaimed a Town in 2000.
- Second populous municipality, home for 11, 377 rate payers and population of 92,043 (2017 Census).
- Areas between Samabula and Wainibuku River .
 - WARD 1 – Makoi, Tuirara, Tovata, Laqere
 - WARD 2 - Kalabu, Valelevu, Naveiwakau, Newtown
 - WARD 3 - Caubati
 - WARD 4 - Narere, Navosai, Muanikoso, Narere Stage 1
 - WARD 5 - Laucala Beach Estate, Kinoya
 - WARD 6 – Nadera
 - WARD 7 – Nadawa, Caqiri, Nasole, Nepani
- In addition, 50 informal settlements with 1312 households ; Caubati Mamas, Caubati Topline, River Road, Omkar road, Beaumont, Nadawa, Muanikoso, Laqere, Kilikali, Nepani, Nasole (Along Kings Road), Tuirara, Veiraisi Settlement (Nadera), Maravu, Makoi (Pritam Singh Road) and Moala (Kuluvotu Ground, Nadera)

Brief Profile of Nasinu Town Council

FASTEST GROWING URBAN CENTRE

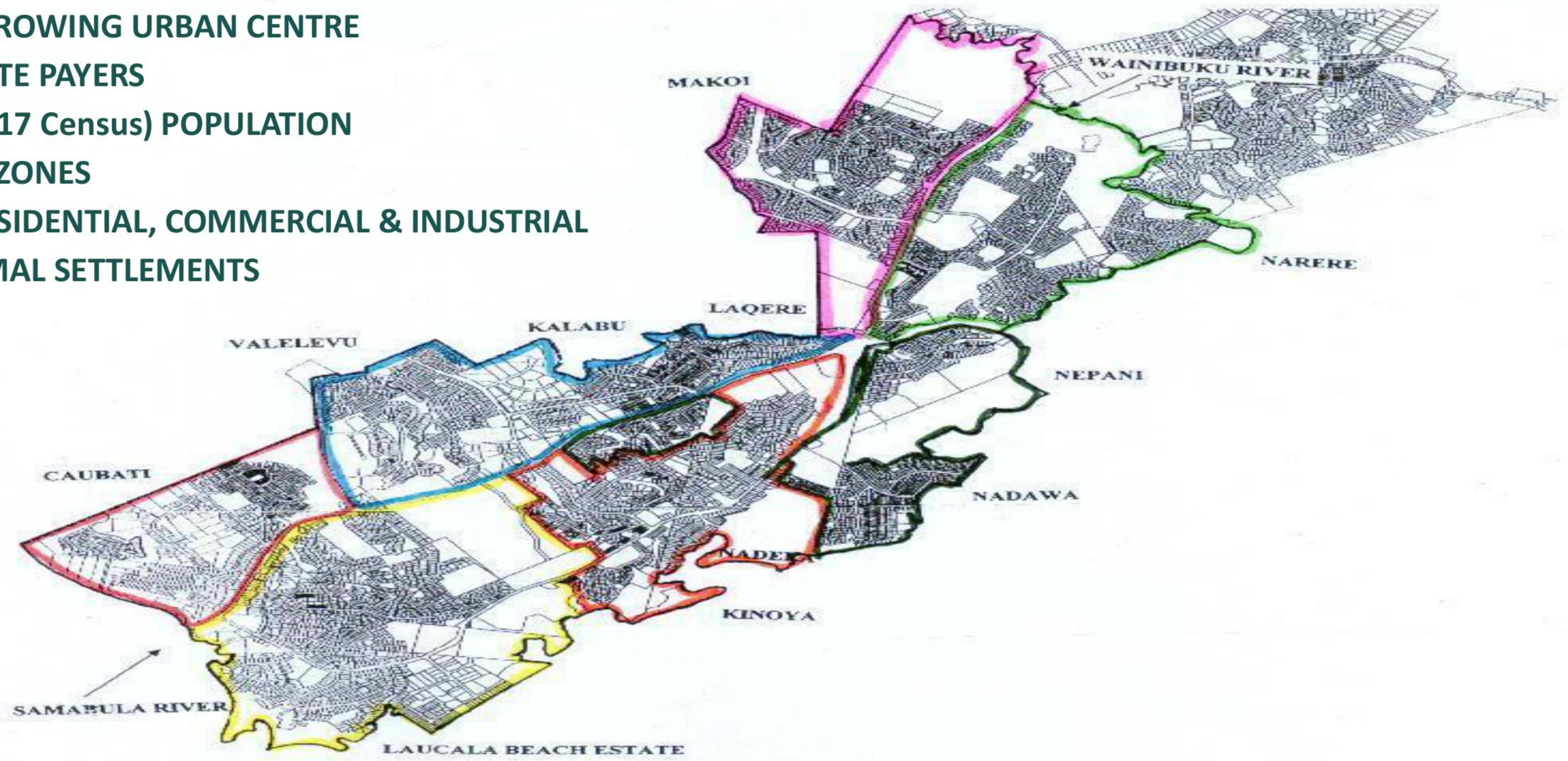
11, 377 RATE PAYERS

92,043 (2017 Census) POPULATION

7 WARDS/ZONES

MAJOR RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL

50 INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



Rates Profiling- Nasinu



Total No. of Rate Payers	11,375
Total Commercial Rate Payers	299
Total Residential Rate Payers	11,076
Last Sexennial Valuation	2013
Last Rate Increase	2020 (implemented 2013 UCV)
Rate	0.006 (Second lowest in Fiji)

Challenges

Nasinu		
	Key Challenges	Way Forward
1	Collection of rate arrears	Continue with court cases. Will need to initiate engagements with other agencies for information sharing and interlinking services. Signing of MOU's with other agencies. Strict monitoring and enforcement of the Local Govt Act including mortgagee sales in worst case
	Review of Rates	Last sexennial value was conducted in 2013 and implemented in 2020 – WIP
2	Non-collection of business license fees, PSV etc has handicapped revenue and possible development opportunities	Request for reinstatement of fees
3	Lack of documentation of accounts from previous years remains a challenge for audit purposes	Last 2 years FS in preparation, board of survey and asset valuation in progress
4	Solid Waste Management – illegal dumping, non collection of garbage fees from informal settlements	Improve enforcement, introduction of solar powered CCTV monitoring
5	Retaining staff - High staff turnover due to higher salaries elsewhere for the same posts	JEE and more recruitment
6	Financial Constrains	Improve collections, introduction of other revenue streams
7	Aging infrastructure, drainage reserves, in proper subdivision issues, absence of drainage scheme plans Out dated laws, there is a need to revise the Local Government Act to allow council better control over the activities in its municipalities, e.g. Illegal development, there are no fees and fines or these are very minimal and do not act as a deterrent.	Assistance from interagency and central government support

OPEN SPACES



WARD #	No:	LAND NAME	LOCATION	LANDLORD	LEGAL DESCRIPTION	PLAN. NO	AREA	COMMENTS/REMARKS	Vested/Not Vested/Lease	Action Taken/ Comments	Description
1	1	Karobo Rd	Makoi	Housing Authority	Lot 75	DP 5212	738.55m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Upgrade ground	Flat throughout
1	2	Makoi Rd	Makoi (William Cross College)	Housing Authority	Lot 37	DP 5210	1516m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Drain Upgrade	Flat throughout
1	3	Lomalagi Pl	Makoi	Housing Authority	Lot 41	DP 5216	9307.76m ²	Childrens Park	Housing Authority		Flat throughout
1	4	Poorva Road	Makoi	NLTB	Lot 26	SO 1815	8538m ²	Open Space Reserve	NLTB	Proposed Children park to be updgraded	Flat throughout
1	5	Pritam Singh	Tuirara	NLTB	Lot 15	SO 1804	6118m ²	Playing Field	NLTB	Upgrading of Ground	Flat throughout
1	6	Pritam Singh	Makoi	Housing Authority	Lot 7	DP 5653	8445m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Upgrade ground	Flat throughout
1	7	Tuirara	Bigji Rd	Housing Authority	Lot 13	DP 5655	1151m ²	Open Space Reserve	Housing Authority	To be upgraded for Childrens Park	Overgrown Grass - To be Develop
2	8	Makosoi	Kalabu	Housing Authority	Lot 42	DP 6910	511m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Park	Flat throughout
	9	Kanace Rd	Valelevu	Housing Authority	Part Off DP 4267	DP4267	3.2982ha	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Multipurpose, Proposed Stadium and Mixed Commercial Development	Flat throughout
2	10	Rambo Rd	Kalabu	Housing Authority	Lot 34	DP 7100	3051m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Proposed Citizens homes 2024 (Future Plans)	Paragrass and not use
2	11	Kanace Rd	Valelevu Ground	Housing Authority	Lot 4	DP 4267	32981.88m ²	Playing Field	Lease to State Lease No:540554	Proposed Multipurpose Development	Flat throughout
2	12	Jale Street (Saioni)	Kalabu	Housing Authority	Lot 24	DP 4726	3422m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	(Proposed Multipurpose Development)	Overgrown Grass - To be Develop
2	13	Khalsa Rd	Newtown	Housing Authority	Lot 1	DP 5416	753m ²	Open Space Reserve	Housing Authority	No Development- Too Close to the road	No development

3	14	Matau Rd	Caubati	Housing Authority	Lot 30	DP 7269	2695m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	(Multipurpose Development)	Flat throughout
4	15	Muanikoso Rd	Muanikoso	Housing Authority	Lot 36	DP 7631	1179m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
4	16	Muanikoso Rd	Muanikoso	Housing Authority	Lot 39	DP 7631	707m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
4	17	Narere Rd	Narere Ground	NLTB	Lot 2	SO 0421	36971m ²	Playing Field	Lease to TLTB Lease No: 4/03/39014	Proposed Swimming Pool Government Funding	Flat throughout
5	18	Kinoya Rd	Kinoya	Housing Authority	Lot 20	DP 3384	1123m ²	Park	Housing Authority	To be develop	Flat throughout
5	19	Kinoya Ground-Velau Drive	Kinoya	Housing Authority	Lot 1	DP 7822	13667m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
5	20	Koka Pl	Kinoya	Housing Authority	Pt Lot 41	DP 3677	1416	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
5	21	International Grounds	Laucala Beach	State	Lot 38	DP 4057	17991m ²	Playing Field	State	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
6	22	Tomanu Ground	Nadera	Housing Authority	Lot 1	DP 4120	11548.71m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
6	23	Duvula Rd	Nadera	Housing Authority	Lot 63	DP 4236	9131m ²	Ground	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
6	24	Mandir Street	Nadera	State	Lot 33	DP 5522	2481m ²	Open Space Reserve	State	Development of Childrens Park & Ground	Presidence Planting and overgrown grass
6	25	Church Street	Nadera	State	Lot 57	DP 5069	2516m ²	Recreation Reserve	State	Proposed for Basket Ball Court	Flat throughout
6	26	Kuluvuto Grounds	Nadera	Housing Authority	Lot 1	DP 4124	46538.85m ²	Playing Field	Part of Land Lease to TLTB	Proposed Strata Housing to accommodate Informal Settlement in Nasinu 2024	Flat throughout
7	27	Moci Place	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 27	DP 6923	1331m ²	Ground	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
7	28	Tiri Rd	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 35	DP 6924	1403m ²	Ground	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
7	29	Tiri Rd	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 35	DP 6926	2096m ²	Ground	Housing Authority	Proposed Multipurpose Development	Flat throughout
7	30	Voce Rd	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 74	DP 7370	648m ²	Childrens Park	Housing Authority	Childrens park to be upgraded	Flat throughout
7	31	Voce Rd	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 75	DP 7370	648m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Playing Ground Used	Flat throughout
7	32	Drevula Rd	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 12	DP 7886	1685m ²	Playing Field	Housing Authority	Proposed Multipurpose Development	Flat throughout
7	33	Mana Place	Nadawa	Housing Authority	Lot 34	DP 6927	1039m ²	Ground	Housing Authority	Not used- To be cleared and develop	Overgrown Grass - To be Develop
7	34	Nasole Rd	Nasole	Housing Authority	Lot 26	DP 6443	765m ²	Recreation Reserve	Housing Authority	1 Squatter is located on site the sitting tenants to be relocated and develop the site for park	Have advised HA

Informal Settlements

Councils Role within Informal settlements	Issues Faced by Informal Settlements	Way Forward
Solid Waste Management	Over crowding, congestion, improper waste disposal.	Introduction of minimum fees for waste management
Collection of Kitchen waste 3 times a week where road access is provided	Crime and drug issues	Council site located in Kuluvutu identified for a PPP Exercise to develop into affordable housing options that will be used to accommodate and formalize the current informal settlements
Provision of skip bins where road access is limited	In proper sewer waste disposal and open grey water discharge	Currently council with partnership with PRB, and MLG is working on a plan before the EOI are advertised
Collection of green waste on a monthly basis	No proper road access, obstructed or make shift path ways. Flooding and other health issues due to poor infrastructure	NTC has conducted a survey on the informal settlements data is currently been analysed
Attending to complaints together with Ministry of Health – sewer issues, poultry drainage and pest control		
Stray Dog trapping		

Multipurpose Court

- This is currently in operation few minor repairs has been done at the end of the last financial year to upgrade the court and the washroom facilitates approximately for \$18K. Currently Council is allowing sporting groups and individuals to hire the court at an hourly minimal charge of \$26.40 day time, \$31.65, 6pm onwards with lights and \$36.95 for full court for tournaments etc.
- Council has also through its community engagement efforts has formed an alliance Nasinu Volley Ball Alliance which organizes Saturday tournaments to keep our youths engaged and away from petty crimes and drug abuse.
- There is a security officer stationed at the site from 6pm to 6am to avoid vandalism and other illegal activities at the site



Revenue Collection



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		
								Total Current Rates Invoiced 2024/2025	\$3,125,712
Number of Rate Payers	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,377	11,377		
Rates Collection	1,957,698.00	2,473,990.00	1,975,106.00	2,197,586.00	2,571,501.00	2,370,366.00	2,334,536.00	Current Rates Collected as at 31/10/25	\$940,234 (30%)
Total Arrears	9,283,205.00	8,890,044.00	9,000,823.00	9,113,692.00	6,891,796.00	7,455,558.00	8,234,297.00	Arrears Collected as at 31/10/25	\$369,509 (3%)
Legal Action Update									
								Court Order (Amount Expected to be Collected)	\$6,266,898
								Cases Filed, Awaiting Date (2174 Cases)	\$3,024,907
								Total Arrears as at 31/10/24	\$16,531,937
								Charges Placed	755

Debt Recovery Strategies (Q5/6/8)



Current Action Plan				Comments
NO.	TYPES OF DOCUMENTS	TOTAL	Remarks / Challenge	
1	CURRENT TITLE SEARCHES DONE	243	Titles Office allows for 20 searches per day of which 10 to 15 are processed on the same day	
2	CHARGES DRAFTED FOR FILING	243		
3	CURRENT CHARGES FILED	463	163 filed in this financial year \$2.30 is the cost of placing and removing charge	
4	Demand Notices Served	1465	started from Sept 23 our challenge is availability of vehicles notices are only served on non banking days	
5	Cases with M/Court	140	Currently active cases with court awaiting decision	
6	Cases filed and excuted in Small Claims	6524	Court Order Made in Councils Favor	
			Approximately 4800 rate payers have defaulted the court order	Requesting boards approval to file for Judgement Debtor Summons This will allow us to get a court order where if the rate payer defaults that it will mean prison term the cost for this will be \$17.25 and can be processed by in house LO
7	Reminder Letters		Generic reminder letters has been circulated in the Laucala Beach Estate Ward and Narere ward this was stopped due to vehicle issues	Council to make use of radio announcements to remind rate payers on the payments cost per month is \$1,100
				Council to liaise with vodafone and Digicel to send out txt blast to Nasinu Rate payers on the reminder for rate payment each txt blast will be costing between \$350 to \$500 or we can partner with all municipals and send a general txt blast msg on cost sharing basis

Debt Recovery Strategies (Q5/6/8)



8	Tenancy Attornment			Council to explore the tenancy Attornment this process will require the tenants to pay their rent directly to NTC in the rate payers account instead of paying to the landlord
9	Mortgagee Sale			As per the act we can conduct mortgage sale to recover long outstanding debt
10	Interest Waiver			Request Hon. Minister to allow for another interest waiver
11	Increase Council Presence in the community			Visiting each ward creating awareness on the work done by council and the reason for rate payers to pay
12	Host and Open day or Week			Use the Valelevu grounds to host a week long open day to educate rate payers and make them aware of the need to clear rates
13	Rate Profiling Exercise			completed
14	No release of Completion certificates, approved plans for rate payers in arrears			This has been a previous practice and for council to continue with this process
15	Establish a debt Recovery Team similar to Neel Shivam or Carpenters			This will be possible after the rate payer profiling where we can establish a team within the team of RCO whose role is to call and follow up or make arrangements for payments.
16	Have a KPI based Performance Bonus			Board to consider establishing a commission based system where all staff help with collections

Disclaimer Opinion

- From the beginning of year 2022 council has started to maintain copies of its requisitions, payment vouchers, payroll records to ensure that all documents are available for verification purposes.
- All regulatory requirements have been updated, with VAT, FNPF and FNU Levy arrears cleared off, and current practice is to ensure that all regulatory requirements are met on a month basis on its deadlines.
- CRM implemented and used for all receipting, options are been explored to migrate to a fully automated accounting system to avoid issues of the past.
- As off 2022 monthly reconciliations are been prepared, reviewed and filed.
- The final two Financial Statements has been outsourced and council will be on par with its audited reports and this will result in timely audits.
- Department SOP's have been implemented and also a Finance Manual and HR manual introduced by MLG, staff have been trained and proper policies are been followed for all transactions

Drainage Upgrade Plans

Description	Area Site	Project Cost	Timeline	Labor Cost	Total
Drainage work within Nasinu area.	Ward 1 - Makoi, Tovata, Tuirara, Laqere	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 2 - Kalabu, Valelevu, New Town, Naveiwakau	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 3 - Caubati	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 4 - Navosai, Narere, Muanikoso	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 5 - Laucala Beach, Kinoya	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 6 - Nadera	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00
	Ward 7 - Caqiri, Nasole, Nadawa, Nepani	\$150,000.00	6months	\$0.00	\$150,000.00

- Availability of funds
- Absence of a Nasinu Drainage Scheme plan.
- Aging infrastructure

Question 9 & 12

- We are unable to provide a comment as we were not part of the management team at that stage however to meet our SDG we are currently working towards green projects
- Use of green waste to minimize dumping at the land fill and using it for compost
- Investment into solar powered markets
- Investments into solar powered CCTV and Street Lights

Updates Financial & Annual Reports

Councils	Last Annual Reports Submitted to Parliament	Annual Reports with MLG <u>yet to be submitted to the Cabinet</u>	Annual Accounts with Auditor General's Office	Annual Accounts Pending with Council (Yet to be submitted to the AG)
Nasinu	2015-2017	2018-2020	2021 -2022 FS submitted to AG Office	2022 – 2023 in preparation stage expected to be completed and submitted to OAG by Feb 25

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON **SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

ANNUAL REPORTS

2011-2017 Annual Reports

SUBMISSION: Nasinu Town Council

**VENUE: Big Committee Room, Government
Buildings, Suva**

DATE: Tuesday, 5th November, 2024

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON TUESDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER, 2024, AT 10.52 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Nasinu Town Council

In Attendance:

Nasinu Town Council

- (1) Mr. Felix Magnus - Executive Chairman
- (2) Mr. Imran Khan - Acting CFO/Manager Corporate Services
- (3) Mr. Tevita Mau - Chief Operating Officer
- (4) Mr. Jone Tuiono - Special Administrator

Ministry of Local Government

- (1) Ms. Seema Sharma - PS Local Government
- (2) Ms. Bindula Devi - Director Local Government
- (3) Ms. Saidi Nazrana - Principal Audit & Compliance Officer

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members and Secretariat, a very good morning to you all. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome everyone to this public hearing session.

At the outset, for information purpose, pursuant to Parliament Standing Order 111, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, please, note that this submission is open to the public and the media and will not be aired live via the Parliament Channel at the *Walesi* platform and will not be streamed live on Parliament *Facebook* platform due to technical issues.

For any sensitive information concerning the matter before us this morning that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. However, please, be advised that pursuant to Standing Order 111, there are only few specific circumstances that allow for non-disclosure, and these includes:

1. National security matters;
2. Third party confidential information;
3. Personnel or human resources matters; and
4. Committee deliberation and development of the Committee recommendations and reports.

This is a parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. However, please, bear in mind that we do not condone slander or liable of any sort and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts.

In terms of protocol of this Committee meeting, please, minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress. I wish to also remind honourable Members and our guests that all questions are to be addressed through the Chairman.

I would also like, at this time, to introduce our honourable Members of the Standing Committee.

[Introduction of Committee Members]

Today, the Committee will be hearing submission from the Executive Chairman, Mr. Felix Magnus, and his Team from the Nasinu Town Council. This is in relation to the Nasinu Town Council 2011 to 2017 Annual Reports.

We acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government, Ms. Seema Sharma. I would like to thank you, Madam, for availing yourself to be present here this morning.

I also invite our guests, the Nasinu Town Council Team, to introduce themselves and then begin with the presentation straightaway, after which there will be question and answer session. Please, also note that if there are any questions from the honourable Members of the Committee, they may interject or will wait until the end of the presentation to ask questions. The floor is open for Nasinu Town Council.

[Introduction of Nasinu Town Council and Ministry of Local Government Officials]

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may start your presentation now.

MR. F. MAGNUS.- I now hand over to our Acting CFO and the Manager Corporate Services, Mr. Imraan Khan, to make our presentation on behalf of Nasinu Town Council.

MR. I. KHAN.- Mr. Chairman, just to begin with, a brief profile of Nasinu Town Council; we were proclaimed a town in year 2000. We are the home to 11,377 ratepayers and we have a rough population of about 92,000. This is as per the 2017 Census, but we have estimated that the population has significantly grown over the years.

Our area starts from Samabula to Wainibuku River. We are divided into seven Wards:

- (1) Ward 1 - Makoi, Tuirara, Tovata and Laqere.
- (2) Ward 2 - Kalabu, Valelevu, Naveiwakau and New Town.
- (3) Ward 3 - Caubati.
- (4) Ward 4 - Narere, Navosai, Muanikoso and Narere Stage 1.
- (5) Ward 5 - Laucala Beach and Kinoya.
- (6) Ward 6 - Nadera.
- (7) Ward 7 - Nadawa, Nasole and Nepani.

In addition to those Wards, we also look after 50 informal settlements that are nestled within the formal municipal boundaries. Some of the bigger informal settlements are listed here, but we are roughly looking at about 1,312 households, with a population of roughly around 27,000.

Continuing with the brief profile, we are the fastest growing urban centre. We have major residential, commercial and industrial zones. The map actually marks the zones that we have at Nasinu Town Council.

A breakdown of our rate profile; we have 11,375 ratepayers, of which commercial and industrial ratepayers are 299. The bulk of the ratepayers are residential, so this 11,076 ratepayers are residential. The last Sexennial Valuation that was conducted for us was in 2013 and the Unimproved capital Value (UCV) was updated in the year 2020. We are currently in the process of having our Sexennial Valuation completed and through public consultation would be implemented in the next financial year. The Rate Struck that we have at the moment is the second lowest in Fiji when compared to all 13 Municipalities. We are charging 0.006 per dollar in UCV.

Some of the challenges that we have listed here are as follows:

- (1) Collection of rates
We have roughly around \$16 million owed in rates to the Nasinu Town Council. For the way forward what we are doing is that, we are continuing with our court cases. We have initiated engagements with other agencies such as the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and with the private sector as well. We are trying to have MOUs with other agencies, conduct strict monitoring and enforcement of the Local Government Act, including mortgagee sales in worst case scenarios.
- (2) Review of Rates
The last Sexennial Valuation that was conducted was in 2013 and implemented in 2020. So, we are currently in the process of doing another one so that will assist with our revenue base.
- (3) Non-Collection of Business Licence and PSV Fees
These are some of the revenue streams that have been taken away from the Councils. This has significantly impacted on our revenue and is also hindering us from providing the services that are needed by the ratepayers.
- (4) Lack of documentation in terms of Accounts Preparation
We were significantly behind with our accounts. One of the major challenges that we had was that there was significant documentation that was missing that we are trying to overcome.
- (5) Solid Waste Management
This is one of the major challenges that the Council has. This is in terms of illegal dumping and non-collection of garbage fees from informal settlements. What we are trying to do is to improve enforcement on illegal dumping and introducing solar powered CCTV monitoring devices to ensure that we can curb the illegal dumping that is happening around Nasinu.
- (6) Staff Retention
We have a high turnover due to the high salaries that are offered for the same positions elsewhere. What we are trying to do at the moment is to use Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) and doing the right form of recruitment, as well as do succession planning to resolve these issues.
- (7) Financial Constraints
As I have highlighted, the revenue sources for Councils are very limited and these impacts on the services that we are able to provide to our ratepayers.
- (8) Aging Infrastructure, Drainage Reserves and Improper Subdivision Issues
This is another major challenge that we have.
- (9) Outdated Laws
There is a need to revise the Local Government Act to allow the Council to have better control over its activities. For example, for illegal developments, the fees or fines that are there are very minimal and they hardly act as deterrence. So, this is where assistance from inter-agencies and the central government comes in that will assist us with our issues.

Next is the list of open spaces that we have. There are about 34 open spaces that are maintained by the Council and have been vested to the Council. The excel sheet outlines the plans that we have to develop these open spaces.

On informal settlements, these are some of the things that we carry out for our informal settlements:

- (1) Solid Waste Management.
- (2) We collect kitchen waste three times a week where road access is provided.
- (3) We provide skip bins where road access is limited.
- (4) We collect green waste on a monthly basis and white goods collection on a quarterly basis.
- (5) We also assist them by attending to their complaints such as sewer issues, poultry drainage and pest control.
- (6) Stray dog trapping is another service that we provide to informal settlements.

Some of the common problems that we are facing from informal settlements are overcrowding, congestion, improper waste disposal, crime and drug-related issues, improper sewer waste disposal, open grey water discharge, no proper road access, obstructed or makeshift pathways, flooding and other health issues due to poor infrastructure.

For the way forward, what we have done is that we have carried out a detailed survey of our informal settlements. The data for this is being currently analysed and will be circulated to other agencies for assistance.

We are also trying to introduce a minimum fee to allow for better waste management. We have allocated a site at Kuluvutu, that is, the Council site, and we are trying to identify a Public Private Partnership (PPP) exercise to develop that into affordable housing options to resolve this and accommodate and formalise the current informal settlements that we have.

The other question was on the Multipurpose Court, which is currently in operation. We did few minor repairs at the end of the last financial year. This was approximately around \$18,000. What we are currently doing is that we are hiring out the multipurpose court on a minimal charge. So, if you are booking the multipurpose court during the day, it is \$26.40 for an hour. If you are booking it at 6.00 p.m. onwards with lights, it is \$31.65. If you are booking the entire court for a tournament, it is \$36.95 an hour.

Apart from that, through our community engagement efforts, we have formed an alliance with the Nasinu Volleyball Alliance which organises Saturday tournaments and it keeps our youth engaged and away from petty crimes and drug-related issues. This is the service that the Nasinu Town Council is providing free of charge.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, we are aware that this project (building) was through a grant from the Prime Minister's Office. My question to the CEO and Team, has it generated any fiscal revenue since it was built?

Secondly, I am also aware that in the last few years, it was sitting there idle and, perhaps, in a very bad state. Now, it has been renovated and so nice to see that again. Thank you, CEO. However, my point is on the funding. What was the fund that was used to bring it back to its current state?

MR. T. MAU.- We obtained a grant from the Ministry of Local Government to maintain the courts but prior to that, we used some of the funds that were readily available through the hiring cost over the years. We used that to renovate the courts and bring it back to the standard that it is today. So, part was from the revenue that was within the Council and part was from the fund that was given to us by the Ministry of Local Government.

MR. I. KHAN.- The next slide is on the number of ratepayers from 2011 to 2017. From 2011 to 2015, we had 11,297 ratepayers. It increased to 11,377 in 2016. Currently, it is 11,375 due to the amalgamation of the Wards.

The rates collection in those areas is as follows:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of Ratepayers	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,297	11,377	11,377
Rates Collection	1,957,698	2,473,990	1,975,106	2,197,586	2,571,501	2,370,366	2,334,536
Total Arrears	9,283,205	8,890,044	9,000,823	9,113,692	6,891,796	7,455,558	8,234,297

If you look at the green box, the total current invoice per year for the year 2024 to 2025 is \$3.1 million. Of this, as of 31st October, we have collected \$940,000, which is roughly around 30 percent of the current rates, and the arrears collected is \$369,000, which is 3 percent of the arrears that we have.

The total number of court orders that we have executed through Small Claims Tribunal or Magistrates Court is \$6.2 million. There are payment plans in place for these ratepayers. We have filed about 2,174 cases that are awaiting court dates, which is more than \$3million. The total arrears outstanding as at 31st October, 2024 is \$16.6 million.

We have placed caveat or charges on 755 properties. This is a means of collecting our arrears. Some of the rate recovery strategies that we have is that we are prosecuting through the Small Claims Tribunal. We are serving demand notices, prosecuting through the Magistrates Court and issuing reminder letters and calls.

We are also doing tenancy atonements, mortgagee sales, interest waiver where there are hardship cases, increasing Council presence in the community, hosting open days or open weeks or trying to get any opportunity to promote the Council.

We have conducted a rate profiling exercise to get updated rate data on all our ratepayers. We are not releasing any Completion Certificate or approved plans to the ratepayers that have arrears.

We have established a Debt Recovery Unit and we have set KPI based bonus systems. There is a slide that shows the notice that we have recently published in the papers. That expired on 31st October, so we have listed all the ratepayers, divide them into residential, commercial and industrial, the number of rates that is owed by specific Wards and we have given everyone time by 31st October to make arrangements for it. From here onwards, we will be publishing names in the papers.

I think that slide has been missed but that is for honourable Members' information. That is something that we did for our ratepayers.

Based on the disclaimer opinion that we had, from the beginning of the year 2022 when I basically joined the Council, we have started to maintain copies of all our requisitions, payment vouchers, payroll records and ensured that all documents are available for verification purposes.

All regulatory requirements have been updated. We have updated all our VAT lodgments, FNPF, FNU Levies, and we have successfully cleared off any arrears that were with FRCS, FNPF or FNU, and we have had waivers of the penalties. So, the current practice is that we are meeting all our regulatory requirements on a month to month basis and we are meeting our deadlines that have been set.

A CRM has been implemented and used for receipting options and we are exploring options to migrate to a fully automated accounting system to avoid the issues of the past.

As of 2022, what we are also doing is, we are preparing monthly reconciliations for petty cash and cash at bank. These are prepared, reviewed and filed. We are in the stage of preparing the last two Financial Statements, that is, the financials for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, and we are estimating a timeline of February 2025 to submit and be updated with our accounts.

Also, we have prepared Departmental SOPs and through the Ministry of Local Government, we have implemented a Finance Manual and a HR Manual, and all staff have been trained to use these for all transactions.

On the question of drainage upgrades, that is currently our plan or our budget for our drainage upgrades. We have identified some concerning drainages in each of the Wards and we have set aside about \$150,000 for each of the Wards for their drainage upgrade programmes. Some of the challenges that we faced with our drainage upgrades is the availability of funds. Also, the absence of a Drainage Scheme Plan for Nasinu Town Council and aging infrastructure.

For Questions 9 and 12, unfortunately, we are unable to provide a comment for those two questions because the Management Team at that time was different and we do not know why that had actually established - the passing of the road infrastructure to FRA and also on the green projects. Our Executive Chairman will look into that in his presentation.

For our green projects, we are minimising green waste and trying to use it for compost, investing into solar-powered markets, investing it to solar-powered CCTV and streetlights.

On the last slide, we are currently presenting our 2015-2017 Accounts. We have already had our 2018-2020 Accounts finalised with the Auditor-General. We have submitted our 2021-2022 Accounts to the Office of the Auditor-General for auditing and that would be planned for this financial year. We are in the process of preparing our 2022 and 2023 Accounts. With the preparation of our 2022-2023 Accounts, it will be on par with our Financial Statements. So, there are only two Financial Statements that are left with the Council to be cleared off. When compared to the previous years, we started off with 2010 and we have successfully managed to complete 12 years of Accounts. Thank you.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, through you, thank you for your presentation. One of the few challenges that you have said is lack of documentation. The accounts from previous years remain a challenge for audit purposes. How did it happen? Who allowed it to happen? Who was at the realm at that time? What actions did the Ministry take?

This is a very serious matter. In an organisation that should be professionally run, we do not have any idea on what transpired and what really happened. Can we have a response to that?

MR. F. MAGNUS.- Having seen the disclaimers and the Auditor's opinion of all the disclaimers, we have met as a Board and discussed the way forward in terms of where we would

forward these documentations that the Auditor has highlighted. Yes, we shall be engaged in other means, apart from the Auditor. We shall be engaging forensic auditors to come in and have a look at all these accounts. and the reasons why these audit opinions have been recognised as such and why the Auditor, rather than an opinion, has given a disclaimer.

Moving forward, we will engage forensic auditors to come and look at the accounts for Nasinu Town Council and that comes right up to 2021. After the forensic auditors have given us their opinion, then we will be able to forward that to the Ministry of Local Government for the next line of action to be taken.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, on the same vein, may I request the Ministry's response on this?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, with regards to the documentations, obviously, there were documentations missing during that specific period. However, during the assessment, whatever discrepancies in accounts were identified, there were all referred to FICAC. Those matters, in terms of discrepancies in accounts and procedures and processes, have been referred to FICAC.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Is there any timeframe given?

MS. S. SHARMA.- It is a matter being handled by an independent commission which is FICAC, but we can always follow up and find out because once it is with a different agency, it is within their timeframe of investigation and reporting.

HON. J.N. NAND.- I think it is always good to follow up, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very for the presentation today. I believe there were 13 questions that were sent to the Council to answer. From the perspective of the Committee, when we look at Question No. 9 and Question No. 12 which was not answered properly, please, be reminded that this is part of our key findings.

After we have our key findings based on this, plus our site visit, we will then be able to submit a report to Parliament. So, I believe, I will give you some time to work on it and come back to the Committee for the verification of Questions No. 9 and Question No. 12, likewise, Question No. 13 which was not actually answered.

MR. F. MAGNUS.- Mr. Chairman, may I be given the opportunity to answer Question Nos. 9 and 12; based on those questions, we have put together a presentation. I apologise that we did not hand in the presentation so that we can all look at it, but I will briefly run through the presentation based on the questions that were asked.

Yes, the Council is embarking on the ambitious journey to transform Nasinu into a smart sustainable city by 2030. The presentation here outlines the future of Nasinu Town Council, the key development goals and the initiatives that will shape the Town's growth to prosperity in the coming years.

Aligning with Fiji's National Development Plan (NDP), the NDP outlines key areas of development and growth. Nasinu's initiatives are closely aligned and these national objectives as such, are focusing on smart city development infrastructure modernisation, community engagement, environmental sustainability and economic growth. So, we have taken our Strategic Plan and aligned it to the National Development Plan and also the alignment to the SDGs. Now, that has further

cascaded down to the individual work in the Units within the Council through the Individual Work Plans, so that will see the alignment from their workstations right up to the national level and to the SDGs.

Nasinu Town Council's commitment to the SDGs is:

- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, transforming Nasinu into a smart sustainable urban centre.
- SDG 13 - Climate Action, the implementation of solar energy, climate-resilient buildings and eco-friendly practices.
- SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, advancing technology-driven solutions for infrastructure and public services.
- SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy, expanding solar panel installations and community solar projects. We are going hard on communities with the setting up of solar lights within the communities for safeguarding of women and children within the community. We are also looking at infrastructural proposals made by investors or developers to see that they comply with this.
- SDG 5 - Gender Equality, promoting gender representation and inclusivity in community projects and decision-making.

The vision for the future is to transform Nasinu, again, into a smart sustainable city, the utilisation of technology and innovation for public service improvement. What we have recently done is that we have done an IT audit of all the IT available technology that is available within the Council and then we will move forward into setting these platforms in place that will enhance the smart and sustainable city. So, enhance community involvement and build strong partnership, promote sustainable development in all projects and policies within the alignment of SDGs and the NDP.

On population growth statistics and community participation, we aim for a 30 percent increase in resident population by 2026. It is a fast-growing town and it is densely populated, so the project for 2026 is that we will have an increase of population by 30 percent. This means that the Nasinu Town Council is setting a goal to boost involvement in local residents by decision-making and community activities by 30 percent.

Currently, we are beefing up on our workforce in Nasinu. We have taken on board and employed more workers so that we can meet the demand that will come in the near future. This include great attendance at public forums, more responsible sponsors to surveys, participation to community advisory boards, engagement in local projects and increased input through online platforms or consultations.

The goals reflect the Council's commitment to fostering a more inclusive environment where residents have a stronger voice and influence in shaping local policies. There was something we found out in towns, when developments happen, there is lack of consultation with the communities. Thus, later on when issues arise, the community comes up with issues that should have been dealt with prior to the establishment of the infrastructure through the consultation process.

We have smart city development goals and digital transformation, so we are currently on that.

The e-governance system, launching a comprehensive system to better service delivery by 2025. The Ministry of Local Government, through the Ministry of Economy, through their bypass

system should see this in place within the next one year or two years.

Smart infrastructure to Integrate the IOT based Traffic Management - our expected result is by 20 percent, that is, to improve the traffic flow by 2026.

Establishment of Public Wi-fi, we hope that we can ascertain 75 percent coverage within 2026 for the whole of Nasinu.

Development of public spaces and Wi-fi infrastructure in place, we are looking at parks. We have recently talked with the designer who designed Ratu Sukuna Park, to come in and look at the open spaces within Nasinu and to see how best we can have these parks designed so that the public and the residents can enjoy a decent park on a Saturday or Sunday.

Infrastructure upgrades and modernisation of roads, the upgrade of 91 kilometres of road. We are talking with FRA on some of the roads within Nasinu to be upgraded. We are also talking with the Ministry of Environment. We are collaborating with the Ministries because of the funding that is available through these Ministries, for drainage systems and public facilities and PPP initiatives with the establishment or building of certain amenities for our people in Nasinu.

Community engagement and empowerment, the Advisory Boards to be established in seven Wards by 2026. Presently, we have youth groups in all Wards which we are using. The youth groups visit their peers within other Wards. So, they empower youth within other Wards but we need to establish the Advisory Boards by 2026 so we hope that we will have the seven Advisory Boards up and running by 2026.

Citizen Participation - our aim is for 50 percent increase in satisfaction by 2026. The goal is to have a platform where residents can have their say on whatever they want to say in terms of whether it is on waste, development, traffic, et cetera. So, we put it out there, they have their say, and we address from the Town Council.

Community Project - We support the local workshops and local events coordinated via Nasinu online.

Inclusivity in line with SDG5 – Gender Equality and community representation.

The Green Project and Renewal Energy and Environmental Initiative - solar energy, LED streetlights, sustainable infrastructure and tree planting and green spaces. So, these are some of the projects that we will be looking at. The first would be to fully solar equip our Laqere Market and should have this ready by the first quarter of next year.

Waste Management Strategies - waste is, again, one of the biggest issues faced by the Town Council. So, waste services, expanding of the waste collection and waste processing areas and we are looking at recycling. We are talking to partners here and overseas, that we put in place recycling plants in Nasinu that will enable us to reduce waste by 50 percent by 2026,

Composting - we are recently establishing our depot where that will have a composting plant, whereby green waste is shredded and turned into compost and manure, which can then be sold and become a revenue generating stream for the Council.

Waste to Energy - we are also exploring this. We are talking with partners in Australia on the establishment of waste to energy. I think the honourable Minister for Local Government is also

talking with partners in terms of waste to energy.

Some of our major ongoing projects and the call to action is the Nasinu Foreshore Development. We hope to develop Nasinu foreshore and reclaim about 200 acres for the Nasinu CBD and industry for community use.

Solid Waste management - we would like to advocate for stricter regulations.

Nasinu Festival and Ms Fiji Pageant - we would like to use this to highlight local issues and also solution-based issues.

Digital Services Expansion - we would like to create online platforms or residents to access freely.

The collective effort to build Nasinu's future would encompass community participation, sustainable practices, collaborative efforts, partner with NGOs, businesses and Government for progress. So, together, we can achieve a smart, inclusive and sustainable Nasinu by 2030.

Mr. Chairman, that rounds up my presentation and, hopefully, I have answered Question No. 9 to Question No. 12. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much for briefing us where we left and now we are updated. I request if we can have a copy of that presentation so that it will be compiled with our report.

Secondly, on Question No. 13, it was actually forwarded for your reasons as to when the Council will submit the outstanding Annual Reports. If you look at the report, you are behind for the last couple of years and this report up to 2017, I believe we may call it a dead report but we still have to submit to Parliament. If you can give us a brief on when the Council will submit your outstanding Annual Reports from 2017 to-date.

MR. T. MAU.- Mr. Chairman, I think the date given there is 25th February, on the last slide, the Annual Accounts pending with the Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that. The floor is now open for supplementary questions.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, I have three supplementary questions, if I may. I thank the CEO and Team for the ability to recover and bolster themselves forward, and I thank you for the brief we have heard this morning.

The first question is, when the receivables are more than the actual revenue, that is really a very dangerous situation, as we have noted in all your reports. I applaud the efforts in putting together these strategies for recovery. If we can revisit that slide, how much of those strategies or projected efforts has really come in at this point, whether it is from the legal funding or returns from legal or recovery from where? On the legal front, how much has really been collected?

MR. I. KHAN.- Through legal actions, just for this financial year - from August to October, we have recovered \$369,509. Because we have payment plans in place, so once a matter goes into Small Claims Tribunal, it is issued out in the favour of Council, we are allowing ratepayers to enter into payment plans to clear out their arrears. That depends, we carry out a means test to see how

much they are able to afford. There are some ratepayers that are paying as low as \$5 per week to meet their obligations.

The full financial year - 2023 to 2024 financial year, we recovered \$1.1 million through legal actions.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, my second question, I applaud again the community engagement strategies that you have put in place, CEO. It is a growing community and it has continued to grow - the corridor between Nasinu to Nausori or Suva to Nasinu. My question is really focussed on your plan to support the fight on drugs.

MR. F. MAGNUS.- Mr. Chairman, in response to the honourable Member's question, we are working in partnership with youth. We are also working in partnership with the Police Department and also the communities that are deemed as red zones.

Apart from the outreach that we do on Saturdays whereby we advocate for zero tolerance on drugs, we have had issues where youth have come in. We are not only looking at addressing the drugs issue in Nasinu but also the root causes. We want to go deeper as to why our youth are engaging in such activities, so we have just completed the profiling of all the informal settlements in Nasinu. The issues arising from these informal settlements are quite shocking in terms of the root causes that led our youth to drug and led our youth to committing crime.

We are talking with the Police Department, we are talking with the youth, so that the youth empower themselves rather than hearing it from us as elders - they rather hear it from their own peer groups. So, that is something we are encouraging with our youth, to advocate for zero tolerance towards drugs and that is happening every Saturday where about 500 to 600 youth converge on the courts of Nasinu. Thank you.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this is perhaps a quite difficult question, CEO and your Team. Is there a drug free community in the Nasinu Municipality at this point in time?

MR. F. MAGNUS.- At this point in time, the answer could be 'yes', the answer could also be 'no', so it depends on the data that we will collect. We are still collating data and once the data is in, we will make it available. Thank you.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, my last question is really on recreational parks or centres. I admire the vision that you have cast in trying to build an economical Nasinu, but my point is the to put into place avenues or areas where the families can sit and enjoy, or young people can do other things instead of doing the other bad things. That is really about recreational parks, as the community grows. I am just wondering what are the plans ahead in building this environment where young people and families can enjoy the parks, et cetera?

MR. F. MAGNUS.- Mr. Chairman, in response to the question, yes, as I have mentioned, we have engaged one of the architects that designed Ratu Sukuna Park. So, he will be coming in to look at all the available spaces that can be designed for recreational parks where residents can enjoy Saturdays and Sundays there.

Apart from that, we are also talking with Fiji Sports Commission in establishing the first Volleyball Centre and a Basketball Court. We are talking with FRU and Fiji Sports Council on the establishment of a fully-fledged stadium in Nasinu Town Council. So, these are some of the things

that we are trying our very best to put into place and see that it is not only put in place on paper but is actioned. Yes, funding is a dire need in Nasinu, that is why we are collaborating and working with the Ministries.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, I have a supplementary question. In the opinion of the Auditor-General, he said that the Council did not observe the proper accounting protocols. Having said that by the Auditor-General, what robust measures are in place to ensure that that does not happen in future, and who will oversee that?

MR. I. KHAN.- As I have said in the presentation, we have currently implemented a Finance Manual. We have prepared departmental SOPs, which are in place for each of the accounting functions that we have. Some of the major issues that was picked up in the Auditor-General's Report was petty cash reconciliations, bank reconciliations and regulatory requirements not being met.

We now have a strict check and review measures in place, and we are checking those on a monthly basis. The first task that we carried out was that we tried to clear out all the backlogs. Once we cleared up all the backlogs, with the assistance of the Director Local Government, we managed to work out waiver ends with the other agencies and then we were able to clear those arrears off, whilst also at the same time, implementing the current practices that we have. So, there are procurement policies and bank reconciliation policies in place, and we are adhering to that and maintaining those files. We are also getting an internal auditor on board to check and verify on this, as well as provide assurance.

HON. J.N. NAND.- What sort of assistance is the Ministry giving in that regard? These are recurring issues.

MS. S. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, as Mr. Khan has highlighted, the issues that were recurring during this period, they have been worked with agencies. We are actually working on a bulk basis now with all the Councils with all recurring and outstanding audit issues. These are issues that incurred in times prior to the current staff and administration being there. We have basically asked the Councils to tell us whether they can resolve those issues? Also, whether those issues have been resolved.

As Mr. Khan pointed out, a Financial Manual has been provided since 2020 from the Ministry, which is regularly updated and as we have mentioned yesterday, we are looking at reviewing and updating that. Internally, within the Ministry, we have set up a Compliance Unit which is auditing the Councils to see if they are actually following the policies and procedures that they said they have put in place, so it is not just on paper. The Ministry is making sure that those procedures and processes are being followed.

In addition, as we had mentioned yesterday, we are looking at a financial accounting software that could be used across all Councils where we will be doing an audit of the capabilities of the Councils, not just in human resources, but their financial ability to get on the new software and what would be the size of each Council in terms of the services they would need to use of the financial software.

Once that assessment is completed, then we will be able to determine what could be a standardised software that could be used across all Councils, which means more accountability of the processes that they are following because things are being recorded online on a digital platform also.

The Ministry, from our end, is making sure the monitoring role that we are maintaining, so we are working closely with Councils in terms of identifying their issues previously noted and moving forward on how can resolve them, and basically, which financial year it will no longer be showing as an issue.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you, PS, for the response. Mr. Chairman, through you, having said so, do you have the right personnel or expertise to oversee that?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, in the Ministry, yes, we do. Saidi is a qualified Chartered Accountant. She is just a new addition to the Team. We are building the team within the Ministry and getting the right personnel. Obviously, skills and qualifications become an issue because we do have a major braindrain in that area, but we are building a team within and we work very closely with the Ministry of Finance's Internal Audit Team to learn in terms of audit procedures that they are putting in place in terms of internal audit.

We also reach out to the Office of Auditor-General to train, not just the Ministry, but also to provide financial training to the Councils, which has been run for the CEOs and the Special Administrators earlier this year. So, we make sure that these kind of trainings are run for the Councils.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, before we move, with regards to Question No. 9 on your list of questions, we just want to add on to what the Acting CEO has mentioned, just to identify why this Unit was disbanded.

In 2012, the Fiji Roads Authority Act actually came into place, which meant that through section 18 of the Act, any assets, interests or liabilities in relation to roads, streets and footpaths that were with the Councils were automatically transferred to the FRA. That also meant that they were responsible for the repairs, the maintenance, the setting up of new roads, the streetlighting and the footpaths.

That, as the Acting CEO will vouch, has created a bit of a challenge for the Councils because the first point of contact for a resident of a town, is the Council. They ask the Councils, "Why is streetlight not working? Why is that footpath not repaired?" So, as we have mentioned yesterday, we are actually working on a paper of transfer of these responsibilities back to the Councils.

As we have said, it will come with a cost to the Councils and we will have to find a way where the Councils are able to sustain that. So, we may need to look at a memorandum of either agreement or some form of arrangement that the Councils are able to have enough resources to undertake certain activities, such as looking at the footpaths, the maintenance of the footpaths, streetlighting, et cetera.

That is currently a Cabinet paper under discussions and the Councils have been asked to provide their support on that through their comments and what they think of the way forward.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, with regard to sports, I think over the years, there have been talks of a stadium in Nasinu. The population is huge and youth and sporting teams such as rugby, soccer, basketball, all need a good stadium. I think Nasinu is the only municipality, to my knowledge, that does not have one. Is there any plan for that?

MR. F. MAGNUS.- We currently have an MOU with Guangdong in China. It was signed in 2018 and we just need to rectify that. We have passed that to the Ministry of Local Government,

through the Prime Minister's Office. We are just waiting upon that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have a few questions from the Auditor-General's Report. Why was the cost of running Nasinu Town Council so high that it incurred deficit every year?

MR. I. KHAN.- Mr. Chairman, if I may, roughly, we are just giving an example of the solid waste management that we have. When we look at our invoicing figure, for garbage fees, we are actually charging \$1.2 million in invoices to our ratepayers. The actual cost of maintaining the solid waste management for Nasinu Town Council is \$2.6 million to \$3 million - that is the amount of waste that is being generated. So, if we look at the figure per household, each member or each household is actually paying between 40 cents or 50 cents for a pickup that is happening at their residence.

Mr. Chairman, just the cost of maintaining solid waste management is that high and also the review of our rates and our expenses that I would say, is the sole reason why we end up with deficits.

Another reason that we end up in a deficit is that ratepayers are failing to pay their rates on time. We need that income. If I look at the financials from 2023-2024, only 54 percent of the ratepayers are paying on time. The remaining 46 percent are in arrears. So, that is one of the major contributing factors to our deficit.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The second question on the Auditor-General's Report, the allowance of doubtful debt is quite huge while looking at the figure. It is unacceptable - it is 2 percent to 3 percent. It may be normal to the accounting people, but how was that calculated?

MR. I. KHAN.- Mr. Chairman, previously, what we have done is we had set up a 5 percent general provisioning for doubtful debts. So, our rate arrears, 5 percent of it would have been classified as doubtful debt. In the recent AG's Report, they have asked us to carry out individual provisioning, so provisioning would be done on each ratepayer.

What we have done to action on that is that we have carried out a rate profiling exercise. We have identified our ratepayers, we have gone and taken information on their place of work and all other activities and, currently, our Field Officers are visiting house to house, trying to identify whether those residents are able to pay their rates. For those that have issues which are genuinely finding that they do not have the affordability to pay their rates, we are preparing Hardship Forms and submitting it to the Ministry of Local Government for approvals and write-offs.

For those that have a means of payment, we are enforcing it through either Small Claims Tribunal or Magistrates Court, or through caveat or through mortgagee sales and we are trying to recover whatever amount has been owed. There are about 345 ratepayers within Nasinu Town Council that owe us more than \$20,000 in rates. So, we are going hard on these ratepayers, and we are trying to recover that.

Another issue that we are facing is that there are about 845 properties within Nasinu boundary that do not have an owner - an owner in the sense that the property owners are deceased, and they have passed on without a Will or their family members have yet to transfer it. These have actually changed hands, for example, from grandparents, it is now with the grandchildren, but no one has actually done a Will or transfer of probate or anything like that. So, it is very difficult for the Council to take any legal action on that. The only option that gives the Council on that is to place a caveat on those properties and this will only come into effect if there is a change in ownership. So, those are

some of the challenges that we face in terms of rate recovery. The deceased owners who owe us rates amount to approximately \$5.8 million.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, just going back to the Acting CEO's response on the proposed stadium, can you tell us details on the location, seating capacity and how much will it cost? It is just for the general public.

MR. F. MAGNUS.- At the moment, we have not gone into costs, but we have looked at concept designs. We have engaged a reputable company that does mega designs both here and overseas, so they have looked at the Valelevu Ground and also the Narere Ground.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Council should introduce a cost centre at the Council so that each department can be re-evaluated and accepted. Are you in the process of looking at that?

MR. I. KHAN.- Yes, Sir, within an automated accounting system, this will allow us to actually determine departmental costs. So, within the departments, if you look into it, some of the departments are providing services but are actually cost centres but these are necessary services. For example, health services that we provide, the health licensings that we do, there are very minimal charges to it or there are no charges to it, but these are essential services that we need to keep there to maintain public health.

What we are currently doing is that with the manual based system that we have, we are trying to maintain Excel records of each of the departments, comparing their cost against their revenue. There are some places where we have introduced additional administration fees and prices, but there are some other areas that we have to actually work on because we are interdependent on agencies. For example, enforcement on solid waste management. If we are to issue a Litter Fine, of the \$40, part of it goes to the Ministry of Environment. For that \$40, once a person pays off that fine, we have the responsibility to clear off those rubbish, but it is a very minimal fine. It is costing the Council more on the enforcement part than it is bringing in. So, those are some of the areas that we are reviewing, and we are trying to review with the assistance of our Ministry of Local Government.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, While looking at your wages and salaries, it is more than 50 percent of the revenue that you have looked at. Most probably, we are looking at changing leadership. Is this true?

MR. I. KHAN.- Sir, previously, the years that we are looking at from 2011 to 2017, unfortunately, none of us were part of those years but all I can say is that, at that time, there were significantly a high number of people who were employed with Nasinu Town Council and I am not really aware about the amount that was paid for each individual and the control measures that were in place. So, unfortunately, I am unable to comment on that.

However, currently, we are 120 people employed - from our health workers to our CEO, who are looking after a population of roughly 120,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Looking at the Report, there is no report of legal collection, but you did mention the arrears from the court by the Council instead of paying a legal department to use the money to get law firm to collect for the Council. Is there any plan for a way moving forward, apart from depending on the normal process that has been in place for the betterment of the Council?

MR. I. KHAN.- Sir, currently, the Council has a legal officer in house. We have EOI advertised previously. The cost of setting up an outsource unit outweighs the income that it is

bringing in. Instead, what we have analysed, and we are trying to boost up our Legal Team with more Field Officers because Small Claims cases can be attended by Clerks as well. So, we have tried to boost that, and we have set up a Debt Recovery Unit (DRU) that is there. The DRU was set up this year. There are about three Field Officers who have been going on and issuing demand notices and on non-compliance, they would be taking legal actions through Small Claims Tribunal.

Another challenge that we face here is that we can file and prepare notices, but the court system also takes time. The cases are prioritised according to that. There is some delay on that and there is some delay from the Titles Office as well. So, in order to file a case, we have to have the relevant documents on hand and Titles Office is only allowing 10 searches per day. So, those things hinder our processes as well, Sir.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, this is my last question. In regard to vacancies, are there any vacancies that have not been filled, or you are looking at more openings in getting better personnel?

MR. F. MAGNUS.- We have currently done an overhaul of the present structure. Now, we have restructured, forecasting the need that will happen in the future. There are vacancies, there are several spots that have not been filled, but they will be filled when the time comes and when we have ability to pay them. So, it is readily available there in the structure, but when the time comes, it will be filled and due to the demand.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much for a very constructive presentation here today. At this juncture, on behalf of the honourable Members and Standing Committee with the Secretariat, I wish to sincerely thank you for availing yourselves for this public hearing session, especially the support from the Ministry of Local Government, who are here to give us some leeway in moving forward in answering the questions, giving the opportunity so that you will be able to work together as part of a team. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves for any further queries or clarifications that the Committee may have on these Annual Reports.

With those concluding remarks, I now close this session.

The meeting adjourned at 11.59 a.m.