

Speculation is rife that Tony Reid will challenge Alan Dick for the Napier mayoralty. Mike Tod looks at the background of Napier's highest polling councillor and what drives him.

Fighter with a winning record

Tony Reid is used to fighting.

He has had his fair share of battles whether they be in the school boxing ring, establishing a business, overcoming cancer or debating in the council chamber.

He has a reputation for being a people person and sticking to what he believes in.

Mr Reid has a background, temperament and compassion that wife Lesley says has made him a leader.

Her sentiments are those most men probably hope their wife would make. But it is the manner in which they are delivered and the reasons for them that make them special.

The couple came close to being eternally apart only two years ago. They discovered each other's inner strengths when Mr Reid was diagnosed with cancer in October 1993.

The successful treatment that followed was an experience they will never forget. Over the period of six months, Mr Reid was required to make six trips to Palmerston North hospital for week-long therapy sessions.

Mrs Reid was by his bedside daily.

"I found that support enormous. I don't think I would have gone back the last time if it hadn't been for her support. It was a dreadful experience. However, all that is behind us. I had a full clearance and the future looks very positive indeed."

Mr Reid said the support his wife had given him in periods of highs and lows was enormous.

"I think the feeling that she displays is enormously comforting."

Mrs Reid said her husband's struggle against cancer, his involvement with

Napier Jaycees, the way he ran Tony Reid Service Station and being a marvellous parent had left her in no doubt he could lead in exemplary fashion anything he wanted.

Taking on leadership roles has been a way of life since coming to Hawke's Bay in 1966 after leaving Caltex in Wellington. He joined Jaycees the year he arrived and played a key role in the organisation for the next two decades.

Jaycees opened a lot of doors that would have been otherwise closed in the conservative Napier of the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr Reid was a driving force behind the Christian Barnard (the surgeon who performed the first heart transplant) dinner at Centennial Hall which raised \$10,000 for the purchase of cardiac equipment at Napier hospital.

The following year he was elected president of the Napier Jaycees and embarked upon the Princess Alexandra hospital project, becoming a foundation trustee. In 1980, he was editor of the Jaycees chapter publication which was named the best magazine in the country.

While with the organisation, he excelled in debating and oratory to become a finalist in national competitions.

His leadership abilities have also spilled over into the sports arena. He is a past-president of the Marewa Bowling Club and during his term an extensive expansion programme was undertaken and Hawke's Bay's first automatic sprinkling systems introduced.



Sportsman, businessman, councillor and mayor?

By his own admission Mr Reid was a good bowler, winning four Hawke's Bay Bowling Centre titles. The most memorable was the triples which was decided on the last end after the lead had changed six times.

Mr Reid said he enjoyed challenges like that and rose to the pressure.

"In the business arena these challenges have diminished since the extensive redevelopment of the service station and the fact it is run by excellent staff on a day-to-day basis. The time suddenly became available to pursue other interests.

The former kid from Puketa, a small town just south of Kaikoura where your own fun had to be made, decided it was time to give something back to the community that had provided him with a successful business and good life.

"I have a social conscience."

He discussed with his wife the notion of standing for council. She shared his enthusiasm and in 1992 he put his name forward.

Mr Reid was the highest polling candidate with 4298 votes or 72 per cent of those cast. He puts the success down to a variety of factors, not the least being well known through his broad range of interests in business, the community, and cultural and sporting activities.

Mr Reid said he greatly enjoyed being a councillor as much as there were frustrations at times. He often felt like one of a few voices in the wilderness.

He said Napier generally was "going in the right direction" thanks to some of the policies of previous councils. However, he disagreed with the direction the current council was embarking upon.

"I don't believe local authorities should be involved in private enterprise projects, other than to facilitate positive developments. If it is likely to be economically viable, there is no doubt private enterprise will fund it. The ratepayer doesn't need to take these risks."

Mr Reid said the Napier City Council was effectively a \$50 million business and skill and experience were needed to manage this in a responsible way.

"I believe the success I have achieved in my own business enables me to understand clearly the council's finances and the importance of the decisions it makes."



Tony Reid and wife Lesley.

Mr Reid said he wanted to see Napier as part of a vibrant and prosperous region.

"I don't believe today that there is enough emphasis on a regional partnership. We are too fragmented. There has to be an end to parochialism, and I think that not forgetting the priority of Napier city."

Mr Reid said presenting himself for mayoralty had far-reaching implications in terms of his business and personal life.

"It requires very careful consideration and I'm working through these things at the moment.

"I expect to make a final decision fairly soon."