

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 10 March, 2020
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
(Chairperson)
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Vince Cocurullo
Cr Nicholas Connop
Cr Ken Couper
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Not in Attendance Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Jayne Golightly

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

Crs Cutforth and Golightly.

2. Reports

2.1 Long Term Plan Vision and Strategic Direction

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting at 1:10 p.m. which was delayed due to a long morning session and handed over to Dominic Kula (General Manager – Strategy and Democracy).

Mr Kula said this briefing will build on Council's decision making on direction setting for the 2019-2022 triennium with discussion and direction following on

from the 5 March briefing, in order to review the vision and strategic drivers for the Long Term Plan (LTP).

Mr Kula sent more information to Elected Members on 9 March and, on receiving feedback, an option had been worked out based on priorities already endorsed for the triennium. He said that this briefing would test that, work through whether or not Council wishes to undertake early engagement and if so what Elected Members would want out of the engagement process.

He handed over to Delyse Henwood (Manager – Finance) to go through the first part of the presentation on the Annual Plan – Opex and Income Statement.

Ms Henwood said that factors from the previous briefing on 5 March had been incorporated into the budget which resulted in a total Opex adjustment of \$489,000.

Ms Henwood said the income statement contained a lot of information to show into context as an overall view. She said the main point was that, although the budget is balanced, there is a closing in the gap of headroom due to the increased operational costs are. The balanced budget benchmark headroom was \$1,355,000 and no significant changes were expected.

There will be another briefing on 2 April where Ms Henwood will explain further, at a relatively high level, the key difference what we have now for the Annual Plan (AP) and what we had for year 3 of the LTP. At that briefing she will also cover what this looks like when it is run through the financial benchmarks.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

There was discussion around the structure for partnership with Maori and why additional budget was not included. Her Worship said this cannot be included as it has not yet gone to a full Council meeting for a resolution. However, it was agreed that it could be confirmed or added after a Council resolution.

Consistency and unknowns, such COVID-19 and a potential stock market crash were discussed.

Mr Kula continued with the presentation and covered:

The 'why' - the initial session worked through priorities which were already set and a vision for next LTP. Mr Kula said staff were looking for Elected Members view on the direction of the LTP and this will be brought back after it has been worked on for their consideration.

Mr Kula said Tracey Schiebli (Manager – Democracy and Assurance) would work through examples of engagement done by other councils but he outlined the process.

2018 + endorsed priorities – picked up what is in the existing LTP and the priorities and key points from the briefing on 5 March 2020.

Feedback from 05 March – outlined the key themes discussed the bigger picture but also began to delve into what funding could look like in individual areas.

Mr Kula said that community outcomes are the next step in the process and whatever we come up with needs to resonate with the Elected Members and their communities. He explained the pyramid process which had been used last time and other different approaches before presenting a draft based on the status quo and an alternative proposal.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- Changes in the past few weeks which Council needed to be aware of were discussed and whether these will have a dramatic change to plans and aspirations for the community. Drought and COVID-19 were given as examples of where Council may need to pull back on some things and accommodate changed circumstances as change is inevitable.
- There has to be some headroom to take advantage of any recession by having projects identified and ready to go in order to create employment in the community.
- Levels of service were discussed and that there might be a targeted rate for higher levels of service. The need to continue levels of service on rural roads.
- There was support for the alternative pyramid as it was very important to get the basics right as a lot of commitments have been made.
- Concern was expressed that, if going public, not everyone would understand and there needed to be a description to explain what the commitment is.
- It was suggested replacing “Ensure we continue to deliver on LoS” and replacing with “Ensure we deliver on LoS”.
- There was discussion around Strategic Planning and Engagement and where the government was headed on their thinking on Port/Navy. Mr Forlong said there would be a decision on the Ports in May but did not know what the outcome would be. He said Council will not be signing off on a draft plan until late this year and by then will have a better idea of the outcome from the government. Mr Forlong said that capital works would keep large numbers of Whangarei people employed when a decision is made and what was learned out of the GFC is that those who stopped took longer to recover from a recession.
- It was noted that there has basically been a stop of all products coming into New Zealand from China and Korea in the IT industry.

- Her Worship said that Council strategies, policies and plans are the fundamentals of Council business and underpin everything.
- It was noted that public transport falls under Northland Regional Council and housing under central government and Mr Kula said these problems were discussed in the February agenda and it was highlighted that Council needed to work closely with other agencies.
- Council's commitment to relationships with Maori partnerships and the community was discussed and this is covered in the document.

Mr Kula summarised around maintaining and increasing levels of service and that there was generally a level of comfort with the Vision and alternative pyramid of strategic drivers. At this point there were minor changes to make and clarify and these could be used as building blocks.

Mr Kula handed over to Ms Schiebli to continue the presentation on early engagement. Ms Schiebli said in preparation for the 2018-28 LTP, Council ran early engagement in July and August 2017 and highlighted the three key points outlined in the presentation. She said there had been a mixed response with good and bad lessons learned.

Ms Schiebli said that they had looked at Waipa who have already started their engagement on their LTP and have taken their vision and community outcomes to out see what the community thinks. She then worked through examples of engagement undertaken by other councils. Staff were now looking for Elected Members feedback around engagement and outcomes.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- A question was raised on the cost of the engagement process for the LTP. Mr Kula responded that for the Annual Plan last year it was about \$35,000 but said the team could confirm the budget for the LTP consultation.
- It was said that confining the engagement process to one month was a bit restrictive and two months was suggested for early engagement.
- A lot of expectations were raised at the community meetings and part of it should concentrate on being more strategic, but also illustrating commitments going forward.
- Ms Schiebli said it requires a special type of skill to get information from the community and could require a facilitator.
- There could be huge value from the flavour of what people were saying at early engagement.
- It would be good to talk to a wide range of the community – from eight to eighty year olds.
- There was support for early engagement, with a longer period so the community are not overloaded with too much information at once.

- There was a query about the LTP timelines and Her Worship referred to the presentation which provided a timeline.
- The importance of roadshows was discussed in order to get a good response as a lot of the community do not come into town.

Her Worship handed over to Mr Kula who said staff would come back to Elected Members with options around engagement with the community.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 14:31.