

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 9 June, 2020
Time: 9:00 a.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 Tricia Cutforth
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Jayne Golightly
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Advisor)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies. Crs Connop and Peters attended the briefing via VMR.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting at 09:00 and handed over to Ms Emily Thompson (Senior Assurance Advisor) to take Elected Members through the process of identifying risks.

2. Reports

2.1 Risk Review 2020

Ms Thompson explained what a risk is, and the terminology used, to help with the discussion part of the presentation. She covered high risk and low risk and the impact probability. Ms Thompson gave an overview of the WDC Risk

Framework and outlined the language used for risk identification and how risks were evaluated through likelihood, consequence and mitigation to get a matrix view of risks across the council.

Mr John Isles (Independent Risk and Audit Chair) continued with the briefing and covered the different approaches for appraising risks. He said it would be useful for Elected Members to advise Ms Thompson and himself where they might see risks and if there are aspects which are not being adequately addressed.

Discussion with Elected Members covered:

- When assessing risk, who has the capability – the practical person who is dealing with it all the time versus the person sitting in the office.
- In order to be effective, the terminology in the Framework should be easy to understand. Ms Thompson said they are very conscious of this and the next step is to simplify the wording. She said Sections 3 to 6 are the core of the Policy which Elected Members need to know, and the framework sits below this.
- It was necessary to ensure Elected Members have time to discuss these opportunities if they are not on an agenda and it is difficult to allow these other ideas to come in if they go off the agenda topic. Mr Isles said it is necessary to strike a balance and workshops need to be created where these opportunities can be discussed.
- There was long discussion on the balance between risk and seizing opportunity at a strategic level. Mr Isles confirmed that doing nothing is a risk in itself in maintaining the status quo. He said you get the opportunity and then test it for risk, but if you are not actively looking for opportunity you will not have a risk to identify.
- One person's risk is another person's opportunity and it was queried how to balance different perspectives when things are always developing and changing. There is an issue in the framework between risk and opportunity and to get some agreement around a diverse group of people. Mr Isles said to talk about it and analyse it first and then define the pros and cons to find some common ground.
- Mr Isles said it was necessary to be careful about evidence from people who were all knowledgeable in their own right but had different views. He said sometimes the evidence can be highly selective and it is necessary to have a discussion around this. However it is necessary to get expert advice to understand the consequences of any decisions made.
- It was felt a big risk is that Council is a public body and public perception in every decision made. The Council is using public funds and working within legislation. Mr Isles commented that it is not much different from other organisations, for example insurance companies and banks, who cannot take undue risk and are heavily regulated with penalties.

- It was discussed that the risk framework has to look at council as both an organisation and a district which are two different entities. Also, how does a risk framework take into account things that are more intangible and nebulous, such as organisational culture and how people work together. Mr Isles said this needed to be taken on board and suggested other local bodies around the country could be looked at. He said Elected Members need to create forums to have good interchange in a relaxed atmosphere.
- It was felt that Staff culture and Elected Member culture should be included in the framework and Ms Thompson said reputational risk and public perception are included. She said culture was not specifically included but there were things that alluded to it and they could change some of the language in that section.
- Central government is looking at how local government is undertaking its business. There is a major threat to providing a public function around water which staff are looking at. There are also a myriad of opportunities but this could be a 'sugar coated stone'. Mr Isles said there is an opportunity as a council to consider doing something different. He suggested accelerating the risk and argue for local problems and local solutions. He also suggesting inviting central government to Whangarei as there is an implied risk in the council/government area.
- Table 2 in the framework was referred to and that it does not discuss risk or damage to council/hapu relationships and other intangibles. Mr Isles said Elected Members could broaden and actively manage the framework in a more proactive approach, to see if there is a risk where not enough is being done.
- Environmental issues and the responsibility that the RMA is being applied and monitored correctly. Specific examples were discussed and the mitigation methods which had been put in place to pro-actively prevent similar occurrences in the district.
- Also that Elected Members have been elected by the public to represent them and need to ensure policies and procedures are put in place for staff to follow. Mr Isles said issues that have been raised need to be addressed and brought back to Elected Members to advise if they are correct or how they need to be changed.
- The reporting of risks was discussed, and Ms Thompson explained how they were accounted for and how they were reported on. She said managers keep an eye on things that may cause issues so they can be managed as they go along and as they become bigger they go up the matrix and get reported on higher up. Mr Isles said this is something for Elected Members to debate with staff, to look at the various categories to say if a risk is over or under stated. Ms Thompson said you have to define the consequences, where are the reds and oranges and which ones do you want reported. These should be periodically reviewed.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 10:32.