

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 29 July, 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 Adviser)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Reports

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 09:00 and welcomed staff members. The content of the presentations is covered in the agenda report and the presentations (attached).

2.1 LTP Activity Briefing: People and Capability

Ms Jenny Antunovich (Manager – People and Capability) said the overview of the People and Capability activity would draw Elected Member's attention to the work done by People and Capability to provide support across the organisation. She said this was more of an operational/management function as opposed to a governance function and decisions influence how we go about our work in Council.

WDC aims to attract the best people they can and to be a good place to work. The people who work here do so because they want to give back to the district and, as a community based organisation, diversity is an important part of growth.

Ms Antunovich covered key assets, ethnicity and length of service and shared information from two external surveys which gave valuable information about who we are as an organisation and where we want to be.

Our Korero was introduced in 2018 with a full survey annually and pulse surveys during the year. There has been a very high level of participation and the results can be used to make good decisions based on what people are thinking, with action plans created from priorities listed in the survey.

Ms Antunovich gave examples of questions and the responses which are based on a scale and said we have improved from last time and also in relation to the government benchmark.

Mr Rob Forlong (Chief Executive) said WDC was proud of the level of engagement and the leadership ratings in the survey. He explained how the Strategic Leadership Team priority system works with cross organisational working teams who contributed to the Organisational Strategy and reducing silos.

Another example was a significant increase in score when it was explained how the remuneration system works.

Comments and Questions from Elected Members:

- Ms Antunovich confirmed the response rate was 93%, with an error margin of 0.2%.
- It was asked if questions around Elected Members could potentially be added to the survey.
- Could further projects/questions in the survey look at Council's relationship with the external interface of the organisation and ratepayers to make sure we are well positioned with our stakeholder interests? Mr Forlong said there is a resident's survey which is now done quarterly and a summary of this will be provided to Elected Members next month.
- Our Korero is completely confidential, two People and Capability staff are able to track responses but they do not.
- Ethnicity having an "Other" option was felt to be inappropriate. Ms Antunovich said this set of data was used as recommended by Stats NZ.
- Customer satisfaction surveys and "mystery shoppers" were discussed. Mr Forlong said the customer satisfaction survey will be reported on next month and "mystery shoppers" could be looked into. However, across the board, this would need to have some resource devoted to it which would mean another job is dropped off or revenue added.

- WDC is below the Workforce Trend Summary in remuneration because we are below staffing numbers.
- Responding to a query on the shared services programme, Mr Forlong said quite a lot is shared informally with Kaipara District Council and Northland Regional Council, with health and safety as an example.
- Exit interviews were discussed and whether it showed if people were using Whangarei as a stepping stone to Auckland or a senior position in a smaller council. Ms Antunovich there was the odd person that fits that criteria but mostly because they had that intention to start with. She said the majority are staying in the organisation.
- City Safe are not included in the total staff numbers as they are contractors.
- An option for an Elected Member survey was discussed.

The briefing adjourned at 10:27 and reconvened at 10:40.

2.2 LTP Activity Briefing: Corporate Group

Mr Alan Adcock (General Manager – Corporate/CFO) said presentations on the activities undertaken by the five departments would be given with an opportunity for questions after each section.

Communications

Ms Jane Ashley (Manager – Communications) explained what Communications do and highlighted their key programmes. Mr Adcock said there had been a move away from office hours and the staff model has to change to reflect that as a lot of things have evolved around the social media strategy.

Ms Ashley said they had been redeveloping the current WDC website and gave Elected Members a preview of how it is coming together and the direction it is heading in.

There was discussion around the new website and its features. In response to a question around people who are colour blind having difficulty reading some of the pastel colours, Mr Adcock said accessibility is underpinning the design and will be built into the website.

Ms Ashley said they will be in touch with all Elected Members to give advice on reworking their pages.

Could there be a quick link to resident ratepayer association meetings to give them an understanding quickly about what is coming in their area in terms of submissions or issues.

It was important to promote Whangarei and the good things that happen in the area.

Ms Ashley confirmed the library website will be brought up to the same standard.

Finance

Ms Delyse Henwood (Manager – Finance) gave a brief update on who the Finance team are and their backgrounds. She highlighted the main subjects of what they do and the key issues faced, especially when dealing with uncertainty.

Mr Adcock covered business partnering and the importance of getting the correct information to give accurate tracking in real time for managers.

Responding to a query as to how the impact of big projects and central government funding will be factored in, Mr Adcock responded they are not currently in any of the LTP or Annual Olan, but we are working through how these will be treated. Ms Henwood said they may look at showing these particular projects separately and department managers will have visibility by drilling down into each of the lines.

Ms Henwood covered the key issues in the longer term.

Mr Adcock was asked if they looked at the financial implications to the district when a policy is introduced. He responded that each one is discussed for financial and budget considerations.

Revenue

Ms Alison Puchaux (Manager – Revenue) covered what the team did and the key issues, included the problems experienced and resolved by the recent flooding.

Ms Puchaux was asked if their department is involved in development contributions and she responded that only when it becomes a collection issue.

Rates rebates were discussed and the ways to make it easier for those with mobility difficulties. Ms Puchaux said there has been an amendment to the oaths Act because of COVID-19 and this permits the rates rebate to be done by telephone.

ICT

Mr Ian Fernandes (Manager – ICT) gave an update on ICT, who they are and what they do. Mr Fernandes covered the key issues and Mr Adcock said cyber-attacks are a key issue and gave a real time example of a cyber-attack happening.

Business Support

As Business Support is a large item to cover it was deferred to a separate session.

3. Closure of meeting

The briefing concluded at 12:20.