

Council Briefing Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 29 September, 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 Phil Halse
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Not in Attendance Cr Jayne Golightly

The briefing commenced at 9.00am.

1. Apologies

Cr Jayne Golightly.

2. Reports

2.1 Approach to delivery of LTP projects

At the briefing on 17 September 2020, it was highlighted that there are two components elected members wanted to see:

- Determining 'what projects Council wants to deliver';
- Working through 'how Council delivers projects', including alternative approaches.

The prioritisation sessions held on 22 and 23 September was the first step of the process covering 'what projects Council wants to deliver'.

This councillor-led session will focus on the second component – ‘how Council delivers projects’, including the potential for different mechanisms for delivery.

Dominic Kula (General Manager Strategy and Democracy) provided a presentation recapping previous sessions in order to set the scene for discussion.

There was discussion on the difference between operational expenditure (opex) and capital expenditure (capex) and the constraints on capex and opex programmes.

Cr Phil Halse facilitated the councillor led session. Cr Halse provided a report to elected members. Key points included:

- Get costings / scope out up front.
- Funding projects differently - large capital builds should be funded through additional debt. This would free up funds for other projects and ensure projects are completed sooner.
- Community involvement in projects – fund projects at 90% of funding in the LTP but let the communities run key projects to Council standards. This would free up capacity to deliver projects.
- Project management – contract project management out to free up staff time.
- Roadway contracts – only 60% of the total funding goes into the actual construction.

Elected member feedback and discussion

Funding projects differently

- Hihiaua is an example of a project that has stalled many times, this is a collective fault because there is no collective plan to move it forward. We must look at ways to move stalled projects forward.

Improving Council processes

- One of the issues raised by the Contractors Federation was the amount of paperwork involved, we should look at improving and fixing our processes.
- We need to streamline the consenting process so there is flexibility to move to construction, enabling us to step up our capital spend.

Improving relationships with Contractors

- Timing is key, early relationships with contractors and the business community is essential. Council needs to be in front of this and forge relationships for development.

Programmes of works

- Projects must be grouped into high level programmes to deliver outcomes. This will enable us to move forward. This will minimise capacity issues and allow more flexibility.

Community led projects

- There are a number of projects which could be led by the community. Examples provided by elected members included footpaths, pull off areas on Whangarei Heads Road, roadside clean ups.
- There are small, low cost projects that could make a big difference to the community.
- Some projects can be led by the community, but some communities do not have the capacity or are not up to the jobs of contractors.
- Communities doing projects could take work away from local businesses and local contractors.
- There could be issues with financial reporting standards or tender conflicts if we allowed the community to lead projects.

Management were requested to provide elected members with feedback on this discussion.

At the prioritisation sessions on 22 and 23 September, elected members requested a review of the total amount of funding allocated to some prioritised programmes. Elected members were requested to provide direction on these.

Elected member feedback

- Sealing of rural roads should not be cut back;
- Cycleways could be reassessed to know the value of this investment. Investment in cycleway infrastructure has been immense in previous years, the investment should be in connections, not building new cycleways.
- If we improve the footpaths we currently have, issue with regards to accessibility and connectivity would be improved.

Next steps

Staff to complete financial modelling based on 'the first 15' capex projects and report back for review mid-October with recommendations on capex, and corresponding opex that could be accommodated.

Clear direction on the following matters will be required to draft the LTP by the end of the year:

- Development and Contribution Policy;
- Revenue and Finance Policy;
- Performance measures / targets;
- Finance and Infrastructure Strategies.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 11.04am.