

Council Briefing Minutes

Date: Thursday, 1 April, 2021
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 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 N. Pestana (Team Leader Democracy)

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing.

1. Apologies

Cr's Simon Reid and Greg Innes.

2. Reports

2.1 Representation Review 2021 - Considerations and principles

Dale Ofoske (Electoral Officer, Independent Election Services) facilitated the briefing and went through the presentation on key principles and considerations when undertaking a representation review.

Elected members were asked to provide feedback and direction on the following:

1. Communities of Interest

In general, elected members felt that communities of interest have not changed that much, although it would be good to have some analysis on growth areas.

There was some interest in taking a clean slate approach, particularly in the urban wards. It was felt that within the community there is a sense of one urban area and the historical Denby/Okara split should be reconsidered. A reconsideration of the Hikurangi-Coastal ward was also suggested. Hikurangi-Coastal ward is a mixture of rural and coastal villages and has a massive area with two distinct communities of interest who experience different impacts and issues. It was felt that a clean slate approach provides an opportunity to look at larger wards for those communities that don't identify with one place or would like to vote for elected members outside of their ward.

It was agreed that a clean slate approach would be used as a starting point. Options will be brought back to Council to work through.

2. Number of Councillors

Elected members discussed what is the best number for effective governance, considering workload and the ability of elected members to be active and useful in the community.

There was a steer that 10 general ward councillors plus two Māori ward councillors and the Mayor (Council of 13) would be a good option to consider, although some elected members felt that the current number of Councillors works best for effective representation. The option of a smaller Council with community boards was also suggested.

It was agreed that options along these lines will be worked through and brought back to Council.

3. Structure of representation

Elected members discussed how councillors should be elected i.e. wards, 'at large' or a mixture.

There were mixed views on this. Some elected members felt that the current ward system provides effective and fair representation. Other elected members were keen to explore an at large/wards mixture.

Suggestions included North Rural and South Rural wards and an at large urban ward, an at large urban ward with councillors elected from rural wards, one or two urban wards with a large rural ward, elected at large and using SH1 to split the district.

It was agreed that options along these lines will be worked through and brought back to Council.

4. Community Boards

There were mixed views on whether community boards should be introduced. Some elected members felt that community boards confuse the issues as people do not

know what these are and all communities will want them, adding another level of bureaucracy. Others were open to the idea of community boards as a democratic way of driving decision making down to community level.

Other options were suggested such as Community Committees which take charge of community issues but where members are not elected, and the structure differs from community boards.

Next steps

Elected member feedback along with community feedback from the informal survey will be considered in order to bring back some options for council to consider further.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 14.53pm.