

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 7 February, 2019
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance

Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
(Chairperson)
Cr Stu Bell
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Crichton Christie
Cr Vince Cocurullo
Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Sue Glen
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Cherry Hermon
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Sharon Morgan
Cr Anna Murphy

Scribe N Pestana (Team Leader Democracy)

The briefing commenced at 13.37pm.

1. Annual Plan 2019-2020 update

Dominic Kula (General Manager Strategy and Democracy) provided an update on the Annual Plan process to date.

During late 2018, a series of workshops and briefings were held to establish the extent to which the 2019-2020 Annual Plan would deviate from year two of the LTP 2018-2028.

A review was undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team and the outcomes of the review were presented to Council at the last briefing in December 2018. Councillors provided feedback on priorities or changes to year 2 of the LTP.

Since the December workshop, staff have been working through the Elected Members feedback on the waterfront bus facilities and Councillor priorities for year 2. Elected Members were shown a list of the priorities identified at the workshop on 18 December. No further projects were put forward for prioritisation. Staff are continuing with the financial review which includes the implications of the Whau Valley Water Treatment plant. The review of our current year's capital projects progress and carry forwards is ongoing.

On 13 December 2018, Council resolved to both formally consult on the Annual Plan while also undertaking to develop a communication and engagement programme.

Tracey Schiebli (Manager Democracy and Assurance) and Merryn Statham (Consultation Advisor) went through the presentation on the proposed communication and engagement plan. The plan is made up of a dual process with traditional consultation along with new forms of interactive communication.

An engagement schedule is in development and was provided to the Elected Members. The schedule plan is a mix of traditional meetings, with new venues and events identified for consulting and engaging with the public.

Feedback from Elected Members on proposed communication and engagement programme.

- The schedule was generally well received and the engagement of a wider range of communities was acknowledged.
- Suggestions included:
 - Community events such as Whanau Falls, and Fritter Festival should be considered.
 - Provision for on the spot feedback as it makes it easy for people to engage at a low level.
 - It would be good to have a small stand with brochures and information for the community.
- It was felt that it should be communicated to communities where and why we have deviated from the LTP and what the effects are. Examples should be provided for example the Rugby Women's World Cup. Educating the public on these changes is part of the process so that the public can understand the reasons for any changes.
- It is important to communicate to the public what is committed and where there is flexibility.
- There was discussion on the four focus areas to be used as consultation and engagement messages. There was a view that these are very centrally based and do not look across the district to connect all communities.

- A concern was raised about the focus on cleaner rivers and harbours. This message must be carefully delivered as this falls within NRC's mandate.

Dominic Kula advised that the key to the consultation and engagement plan is to manage expectations, ensure a balance between urban and rural and to use the themes as illustrations of projects.

Tracey Schiebli took the Elected Members through the key dates for the Annual Plan process, as contained in the presentation.

Dominic Kula provided an update on progress since the December Workshop advising that options for waterfront bus facilities would be brought back through the Infrastructure Update meeting and decisions around the Whau Valley Water Treatment Plant would be incorporated in the draft.

Dominic went through staff feedback on councillor priorities identified in December grouping these into matters that were responded to in that Workshop and those that were requests to keep on the same track. Of the four remaining priorities, all but 'work on Almond Court flats should be prioritised', where councillor feedback was mixed, had previously been covered in the presentation.

Next steps

- Elected Members feedback from this briefing will inform the final modelling and be used to produce engagement and consultation materials.
- The Consultation Document and supporting information will be worked through at the 14th February briefing.

2. Fees and charges

Alison Geddes (General Manager Planning and Development) provided an update on the setting of fees and charges for 2019-2020.

Generally, fees and charges will be adjusted in accordance with the LTP 2018-2028 (inflation). Some minor changes to fees and charges for the 2019/20 year have been proposed, including:

- Forum North venue hire
- Animal cremation
- Natural burials
- Water connections
- Waste Charges
- Deposits payable under the Resource Management Act and Gambling Act

Consultations will be confined to Resource Management Act, Food Act and Gambling and Racing Act as these are required by legislation.

A detailed report on the changes to fees and charges will be provided for the February council meeting.

Feedback from Elected Members on proposed changes to fees and charges

- There was discussion on the increasing of Forum North Venue Hire fees. Staff advised that these fees have not been increased in years. It was felt that clear guidelines must be set and this should be across the board and fair.
- There was discussion on the increasing of fees for animal management (stray animals and animal cremations) and who should pay this fee. Alison Geddes advised that this fee is for dog owners only and is spread out over dog owners across the district.
- There was a view that fees for businesses must be moderate and we should be clear about what we are charging for.

3. Productivity Commission issues paper

Tony Horton (Manager, Strategy) went through the presentation on the issues paper published by the Productivity Commission in November 2018.

The issues paper outlines how Local Government is funded and financed and sets out options around future funding and financing tools. Feedback on the paper has been sought from councils and this feedback will be used to inform a draft report (to be released in June 2019) and a final report to be presented to Central Government in November 2019.

Council staff have reviewed the issues paper and draft feedback from Local Government New Zealand, as contained in the presentation. Staff recommends supporting LGNZ's feedback, but with additional points relating to our district such as:

- Stronger emphasis on the pressures of growth and changing population
- Discussion on the limitation of the current rating model versus other revenue streams
- Difficulties and opportunities with the certainty surrounding contestable funds
- Burden of central government requirements without resource support or adequate lead time
- Recognition that we are in a relatively good financial position which prevents us from accessing central government funding

- Need for any funding changes to support / align with future legislative or policy changes by Central Government

Feedback from Elected Members on the Productivity Commission issues paper

- There was discussion about the role and responsibilities of local government.
- There was agreement that our council, though not at our debt limit, is a high growth area and our communities would benefit from government funding.
- Other sources of funding for local government was discussed, particularly whether a sales or financial transactions tax in the district could be levied.
- Tourism is the biggest industry and yet local government must fund this.
- Elected Members were supportive of endorsing these recommendations for purposes of feedback to inform the draft report.

3. Closure of workshop – The workshop closed at 15.03pm.