
MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE STRATFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL HELD BY AUDIO VISUAL LINK ON TUESDAY 28 APRIL 2020 AT 1PM TO HEAR AND CONSIDER SUBMISSIONS TO THE RATES REMISSION POLICY

PRESENT

The Deputy Mayor A L Jamieson (the Chairman), the District Mayor N C Volzke, Councillors M McKay, V R Jones, R W Coplestone, P S Dalziel, G W Boyde, W J Sandford, A K Harris, J M S Erwood, and G M Webby.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive – Mr S Hanne, the Director Community Services – Ms K Whareaitu, the Director Corporate Services – Mrs T Radich, the Director Assets – Mrs V Araba, the Director Environmental Services – Mr B Sutherland, the Executive Administration Officer – Ms R Vanstone, the Revenue Manager – Mrs J Erwood and two members of the media (Stratford Press and Taranaki Daily News).

1. **WELCOME**

The Deputy Mayor welcomed the District Mayor, the Chief Executive, Councillors, staff and the media.

2. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

3. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Policy and Services Committee meeting. It was reinforced to Councillors that the purpose of this meeting was to hear and consider submissions on the Rates Remission Policy. Councillors were asked to hear submissions with an open mind, to restrict their question time to the submitter to points of clarification or issues pertaining to the subject matter. Councillors were requested not to get into direct dialogue with the submitter as there is tight timeframe scheduled for the day. Councillors could take notes whilst the submitter was speaking.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST**

The Deputy Mayor requested Councillors to declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest relating to items on this agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

5. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUBMISSIONS**

Submissions pages 4-11

Attached are the 3 submissions received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT each of the 3 submissions to the Rates Remission Policy be received.
2. THAT each submitter be individually thanked for their submission, and a copy of the minutes of the Policy & Services Committee Meeting and subsequent meetings be provided to each submitter.

BOYDE/VOLZKE

Carried

P&S/20/39

Recommended Reason

Each submission is formally received and the submitter provided with information on decisions made.

6. **SUBMITTERS TO BE HEARD**

(no report)

Submitters are given 5 minutes to speak to the Committee. Five minutes is also allocated for questions from the Committee.

Mr Richard Pratt joined the meeting at 1.05pm.

Richard Pratt	Whangamomona Hotel
Points noted:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Whangamomona Hotel sees value in the rates remission as provided by the council. With little infrastructure in the town, the pub becomes the hub for support to residents and visitors.• When questioned by the District Mayor, Mr Pratt clarified that the hotel has heritage 2 status and as such exterior alterations cannot be made to the building. Where they must be made, there is an expectation that 'like will be replaced by like'. There are no other financial implications imposed on him as the owner of a heritage status building.• The Deputy Mayor asked Mr Pratt whether he thought the hotel should be eligible for a subsidy given it operated as a commercial business. Mr Pratt responded that he sees himself as the caretaker of the hotel and that the sustainability of the business is very much dependent on support from the district. While his business seeks funding, the township of Whangamomona is the vehicle to access that funding. Even the smallest level of support was an acknowledgement of the hotel's importance to Whangamomona and the wider district.	

Mr Richard Pratt left the meeting at 1.11pm.

7. **RATES REMISSION POLICY – DELIBERATION AND ADOPTION**
D20/6368 (Pages 12-18)

Discussion

Council needs to consider submissions to the Rates Remission Policy as part of the consultation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT the report be received.

BOYDE/HARRIS
Carried
P&S/20/41

2. THAT subject to any new information from submissions highlighted at the hearing, the *draft* Rates Remission Policy be adopted.

3. THAT the commencement date of the Rates Remission Policy be 1 July 2020.

JAMIESON/COPLESTONE
Carried
P&S/20/42

Recommended Reason

The changes to the current Rates Remission Policy ensure a fair and efficient approach and application of rates.

The Director – Corporate Services noted that three submissions were received and proposed one change to the original draft policy - to retain the biodiversity remission policy covering land with biodiversity vegetation.

Submissions:

- The Director – Environmental Services confirmed that central government is currently considering legislative changes around biodiversity. No timeframe has been established as yet. For this reason, the Revenue Manager clarified that the biodiversity remission policy would remain until more was known. Any change would be brought back to council in the future.
- Whilst Mr Pratt held the view that the removal of any support for heritage buildings endangered their existence, of the 29 registered heritage buildings and sites in the district, only three were currently receiving a rates remission, reported Mrs Erwood. These are the Douglas Boarding House (a private residence), a historic kauri tree in the grounds of the former Douglas School and the Whangamomona Hotel. In the current financial year, the total remission across the three sites totalled \$558.35. It was therefore prudent to ask whether rates remission was the best way to achieve protection.
- Councillor McKay asked what targeted rates the Whangamomona Hotel was currently charged. Mrs Erwood confirmed that the hotel is not charged a targeted rate and that any changes to the building itself were entirely funded from the owner's pocket.
- The District Mayor confirmed that contestable funding is available for heritage classified buildings, however heritage 1 buildings were the major recipients. The Whangamomona Hotel as a heritage 2 listed building has limited opportunities to receive the same funding.
- In considering the Federated Farmers and QEII National Trust submissions, which opposed the removal of rates remissions for land subject to an open space covenant and land with biodiversity values, Mayor Volzke commented that removal of the rates remission on covenanted land could see the rateability of the land be subject to Council's interpretation.

While not necessary from a rating perspective as covenanted sites were non-rateable under the Local Government Rating Act, inclusion could aid clarity.

- Mayor Volzke asked if the historic tree should continue to receive a rates remission. The Deputy concluded that if the tree was under reserve status, a remission is entirely appropriate. Councillor Coplestone sought clarification on whether the tree was in the correct category for consideration. Mrs Erwood confirmed that the tree is listed in the heritage register.
- Councillor Boyde asked whether rates remissions are publicised. Mrs Radich confirmed that the rates remission policy is publicised with the annual assessment notice that goes to all ratepayers at the beginning of the financial year. The policy is also available on council's website.
- Councillor Dalziel asked for the total cost of rates remissions to council if all eligible sites applied. Mrs Erwood explained that of the 29 heritage sites eligible for rates remission (heritage society registered), 16 are privately owned. The remainder are council properties. In terms of costing, there is no set procedure in place.
- Mrs Radich advised that no other councils that she investigated have a heritage remission policy. Some choose to support by way of heritage funding.
- Councillor Jones suggested that elected members be presented with options enabling heritage sites to be supported. This was reiterated by the Deputy Mayor who added that all ratepayers received the same benefits in terms of roads, water and waste and that the community was the beneficiary of the heritage sites. He would like to see heritage sites supported in a different way.
- Mayor Volzke suggested that while removing the remission would satisfy the rating demand, support to private and public heritage buildings could be through the Community Relationships Policy being considered for finalisation later in this meeting. The Director – Community Services confirmed that this was an option.
- The Deputy Mayor moved that the rates remission policy covering land with a heritage structure be removed and council officers consider and report on other options of support. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Webby.

The meeting closed at 1.37pm.

A L Jamieson
CHAIRMAN

Confirmed this 26th May day of 2020.

N C Volzke
DISTRICT MAYOR