

Date: Tuesday 17 May 2022 at 10am
Venue: Council Chambers, 63 Miranda Street, Stratford

Present

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

In attendance

The Chief Executive – Mr Sven Hanne, the Director Corporate Services – Mrs T Radich, the Administration & Communication Support Officer – Ms R Vanstone, the Communications Manager – Ms Gemma Gibson, the Corporate Accountant – Mrs Christine Craig, the Roading Asset Manager – Mr Steve Bowden, the Community Development Officer – Ms V Fischer, the Revenue Manager – Mrs J Erwood, two members of the media (Stratford Press and the Taranaki Daily News) and four members of the public.

Via audio visual link: The Director Environmental Services – Mr Blair Sutherland, the Director Assets – Mrs Victoria Araba and the Director Community Services – Ms Kate Whareaitu.

1. Welcome

The opening karakia 'Kia Uruuru Mai' was led by Councillor J M S Erwood.

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

The Deputy Mayor reiterated the health and safety message and emergency procedures.

2. Apologies

Recommendation

THAT an apology be received from Councillor P S Dalziel.

BOYDE/HARRIS
Carried
P&S/22/62

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

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 relating to items on the agenda.

5. Attendance Schedule

The Attendance Schedule for Policy and Services Committee meetings (including hearings) was attached.

6. Acknowledgement of Submissions

Submissions Pages 17-227

Attached are the 23 submissions received to the Draft 2022/23 Annual Plan.
No submissions were received for the Draft Revenue and Financing Policy.

Recommendations

1. THAT each of the 23 submissions to the Draft 2022/23 Annual Plan be received.
BOYDE/McKAY
Carried
P&S/22/63
2. THAT each submitter be individually advised of the outcome of their submission, and notified that the minutes of the Policy & Services Committee meeting, and subsequent meetings, are available on Council's website.
McKAY/ERWOOD
Carried
P&S/22/64

Recommended Reason

So that each submission is formally received and the submitter provided with information on decisions made.

7. Submitters to be Heard

Eight submitters requested to heard in support of their submission.

Submitters were given 5 minutes to speak and five minutes to answer questions from Elected Members.

Submission Number	Name	Page Number
5	Tom Vos	24
<i>Mr Vos did not attend the hearing.</i>		
Submission Number	Name	Page Number
8	Floyd Riley	45
<i>Mr Riley did not attend the hearing.</i>		

Submission Number	Name	Page Number
9	Bill Davies	47
<p>Points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Davies is a former farmer who lived at Te Popo for a number of years, on a poorly constructed road. He has been involved in forestry for 30 odd years and was an early 'pioneer' of forestry in the district. Mr Davies has addressed this council many times on the potential problems that were developing on the roads due to poor construction and heavy vehicles. • The lack of action by council to adequately maintain the roads over these decades is the cause of the state that the roads are in today. • Historically, there was no money in sheep farming on the eastern hill country in the 1970s to nineties. Tree planting was seen as a solution to this as well as the collapsing hillsides from extreme weather events. Farmers were given all sorts of subsidies to plant trees. Thirty years later, those trees need harvesting. • Iniquitous that landowners are now being penalised for a (roading) issue that was never addressed. • Trees are not necessarily owned by the landowner, rather leased on a harvest basis. <p>Questions/Points of Clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor Volzke asked, where the land owner is leasing land to a forestry owner, have they the ability to pass on 'costs' such as rates in the form of extra lease. Mr Davies clarified that in his own situation, the landowner receives a small percentage of profit to cover rental and property maintenance. His own forestry arrangement was not designed to cover rates. 		
Submission Number	Name	Page Number
11	Debbie McKinlay	51
<p>Points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs McKinlay noted her disappointment of further rate increases so soon after a 10 year plan. • She felt that most ratepayers would agree with a forestry rate but landowners would see this differently. She felt that there was not enough consultation on the matter. • Some issues are continually raised – waste management, housing and sub-divisions and cemetery maintenance. • The cemetery is a constant cause of concern for her. There is no pride in the upkeep of this important community asset. Lawns are not mown regularly, there are overgrown weeds, a growing compost pile, an unkept rose garden and plantings which have not been cared for and are dying off. Stratford's cemetery was served well by a sexton in previous years. • Feels like the community has not been kept in the loop regarding Stratford 2035 and see's that there are plans to consult again. • Various calls to the Service Centre go unanswered or result in no action. For example, footpaths in the dell require maintenance but her calls and/emails either go unanswered or she receives a response some 3 weeks later. • Would like to know if council is planning water meter installation as this will make a huge difference to ratepayers. 		
Submission Number	Name	Page Number
16	Judy Drummond Stratford Croquet Club	60
<p><i>Mrs Drummond was supported by Mrs Eileen Judd from the Stratford Croquet Club.</i></p> <p>Points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Drummond noted that the clubs membership is increasing from 12 to 32 members and the two existing courts means that only 16 players can play at any one time. The club holds club days on Tuesdays and Saturdays and twilight games on Thursday evenings in the summer time. There is growing interest among younger players for a new version of the game called 'gate ball'. More capacity would mean more players and game time. 		

- Significant benefits for the existing club and new members – both young and old – in the community for relocating the facilities to the grassed area on the corner of Regan and Cordelia Streets which has room for three courts, clubrooms and equipment sheds. Cost of this development is \$182,000. Funding applications would be made to TET and TOI Foundation for those costs. Otherwise, the club would look to develop a smaller practice court just outside the current facilities – a temporary measure only.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- The Mayor asked if there have been discussions with other clubs to share facilities. Mrs Drummond clarified that there is not enough space at the bowling club and a golf club option has not been explored.
- Councillor McKay sought clarification on whether the club seeks land to be put aside or other funding from council. Mrs Drummond confirmed land only.
- It was clarified that the sport is gaining popularity amongst young people. In Hāwera particularly there are youth champions coming through. Unfortunately due to lacking the space, the club cannot support this new interest group in Stratford.
- Association members/players play on other days (to social days).
- When referring to the Cordelia/Regan Street site, Councillor McKay asked whether the area could be dual purpose. It was clarified that rugby (sprigged boots) and croquet are not compatible. No other users could use the space.

Submission Number	Name	Page Number
17	Shellie Anne Vesty	63

Points noted:

- Mrs Shellie Vesty noted that the tensions between cemetery user expectations and levels of services and she thinks that levels of services need to be increased or the contractor changed.
- She shared the views of others in the community that the current cemetery contractor had a 'that'll do' attitude. Her concerns are that lawns don't appear to be mowed, edges are unsightly, newly laid concrete slabs are either etched or stencilled (there is no consistency) and that there are no shade trees in the cemetery.
- Cemeteries in South Taranaki are beautifully kept. Mrs Vesty has learnt that the contractor does an 'a grade' mow which is obviously to a very high standard.
- Regarding forestry, she has found the consultation process very interesting and felt that Mr Barrie Smith's suggestion of getting parties together to discuss the issues, was a good one. She wanted to remind elected members about the importance of trees to the district and cannot understand how there has been no forward thinking with regards to roading when harvesting, particularly since the council has had upwards of 25 years to plan for the event.
- If forestry block owners no longer planted trees, there would be serious repercussions for the district.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- Councillor Boyde asked Mrs Vesty if she thought that ratepayers should be penalised for the impacts of forestry. Mrs Vesty felt that there needed to be more information available to ratepayers. For instance, she has learnt that logging trucks pay quite a lot for RUC compared to a ute.
- Councillor Webby suggested a community driven working group to maintain the cemetery.

Submission Number	Name	Page Number
20	Stephen Houghton L&R Forestry	72
<i>Mr Houghton was unavailable to speak to his submission due to business commitments.</i>		
Submission Number	Name	Page Number
18	Mark Hooper & Shaun Hazelton Federated Farmers of New Zealand	64
<i>Mr Hazelton could not attend the meeting. Ms Adrienne Cook attended in his stead.</i>		
<p>Points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Hooper acknowledged the challenging times for council and appreciated the need to keep general rates rises as low as possible. • Federated Farmers supports a roading differential however has concerns that growers on land with a higher rateable value due to their predominant land use yet may contain reasonably sized forestry blocks would not be captured by the differential. Understand that this is council's intent and that the differential will only capture blocks that are predominantly forestry only. • Careful consideration be given to the types of forestry captured – that it would exclude indigenous forestry, protected forestry. With the trend toward blanketed forestation there would be farms currently classed as forestry vacant whilst transitioning to forestry and whether they would be captured if there was an intent for blanketed forestation. • In terms of cost recovery, there are other options for consideration when addressing forestry including bylaws for payments and road closures. There is a possibility under the Land Transport Act to prohibit or restrict some classes of traffic deemed unsuitable for use on particular roads. There's also a graduated response in relation to damage such as security, prohibiting, and costs to reinstate or strengthen the road, a payment for damage that has or is likely to occur or a toll. • Federated Farmers asked whether a roading differential will be enough to cover costs. Gisborne District Council consider that a roading differential falls well short of the cost of damages. They are currently investigating other measures in addition to a roading differential. • Forestry landowners have access to other incentives such as carbon credits or be receiving/pending receipt of a grant from the currently closed 1 billions trees fund. • Highlighted the decision of Wairoa District Council on the appeal to forestry on the increased rates to forestry land. The council considered the negative outcomes on communities especially the wellbeings as a result of forestry increases in the district. Federated Farmers would like to highlight that the wellbeings of the community should be at the forefront of decisions like this. • When roads are damaged, there are impacts to rural households. It is unreasonable for rural communities to expect a level of interruption to occur when harvesting of forests are being undertaken. • Would like to see an improvement in road sealing on the district's roads. • Supports the maximum use of UAGC in rates setting and less reliance on general rates. Suggests that UAGC be lifted from 22 per cent to 30 per cent under the Local Government Act. • Seeks some consistency on waste management charges as farmers have different needs from urban dwellers. • Would like to see better management of roadside spraying to prevent the growth of yellow bristle grass further into the eastern district. <p>Questions/Points of Clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Boyde commended the organisation for considering other tools to deal with the effects of forestry harvesting on roading. • Councillor Harris noted the classification of forestry vacant and asked whether this is land earmarked for planting. Mr Hooper commented that they are seeing entire farms being bought with the intent of planting in forestry and so there's often a lag time between the purchase and the forestry being active. That then becomes a forestry vacant period and falls in between any other classification at present. 		

- Councillor Harris – those lands that could be classified as vacant would get flagged once planted under the QV system.
- Councillor Harris was supportive of traffic management as other measures to the forestry differential and asked what the Federated Farmers would like to see. Ms Cook clarified that it depended on what the council would assess. South Taranaki have a seasonal ban on some roads. Perhaps charging heavy traffic operators.

8. Consideration of Submissions

Council needs to consider submissions to the Annual Plan 2022/23 as part of the consultation process. There were no submissions to the Draft Revenue and Financing Policy.

Recommendations

1. THAT the amendments arising from the internal submission be made to the Draft Annual Plan 2022/23 annual plan as a result of the public consultation process.
2. THAT prior to the adoption of the annual plan a memo be supplied to Elected Members providing options for the future operations and maintenance of cemetery/ies to be considered in the adoption of the annual plan.
3. ~~THAT the proceeding amendments be adopted and recommended to Council for inclusion in the Annual Plan 2022/23.~~
3. THAT the Annual Plan 2022/23 and Revenue and Financing Policy will be presented to a future Ordinary Meeting of Council for adoption with the proposed changes.

ERWOOD/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/22/65

Submission 3

Points noted in discussion:

- The Director Corporate Services noted that this submission had arisen when council introduced the 50 per cent charge on water and wastewater targeted rates. Most neighbouring sections with the same owner and same use will have one rate. This particular property has a private driveway between two sections which attract two of each charge. This submission could be dealt with under the Rates Remission Policy being considered at the hearing next Tuesday.
- Mayor Volzke noted that the submitter has regularly corresponded with him since she received her first rates bill and there have been a number of discussions about this. She was taken by surprise by the charges arguing that she does not intend to use services therefore why should she pay. The Mayor has checked and rates are being charged consistently. That being the case, the situation would only be addressed if the policy changed. The submitter has made the submission to the Annual Plan however it should have been submitted to the rates remission policy instead.
- Elected members were satisfied to refer this submission to the rates remission policy hearing. The submitter will be invited to speak.

Submission 11

Points noted in discussion:

- Mr Hanne noted that there are times when mowing (at the cemetery) cannot happen for various reasons. In general the contractor meets the level of service. If council wanted to address these concerns, one way to do so would be to lift the level of service which we do as a contract variation but that costs money. We could also give the cemetery a one off capital work programme to address some of the issues.
- Councillor Boyde noted that the biggest number of complaints in the customer survey is the cemetery. He asked if the contract is still fit for purpose.

- Councillor Jones noted that grades of mowing were mentioned and asked if that was available as an option. Mr Hanne noted that grades were used in this council's contract.
- The Deputy Mayor asked when the contract is up for renewal. The Director Assets clarified that the contract is currently being rolled over and a further two years given. Changing levels of service requires approval.
- Councillor McKay asked if the annual cost of the contract is known. Mrs Araba clarified that the entire parks and reserves open space maintenance contract is between \$700-800,000. It could be possible to separate the cemetery maintenance portion from the main contract.
- Councillor Sandford commented that some quick fixes were available – using a catcher on the mower for instance. He noted that he had never see the rose garden that Mrs McKinley referred to in her submission and he agreed that the compost heap is getting bigger.
- Councillor Coplestone noted that the Eltham cemetery is planted with a lawn grass whereas Stratford is a pasture grass.
- Councillor Jones asked how levels of service are monitored. Mrs Araba clarified that inspections of work are conducted by council in relation to specific outcomes. The frequency of inspections could be increased as an option.
- Councillor Webby noted that some submissions referred to community groups or working bees at the cemetery. Mr Hanne will speak to the community development team about this possibility.

Waste management

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Harris asked why there is an increase in the costs of waste being collected and whether this is due to increasing waste coming from existing houses. Mr Hanne noted that the increase was due to increased costs hence the work on waste minimisation.
- Councillor Sandford asked if the replacement of bins was due to the contractors dropping bins. Mr Hanne clarified that it was partly this and partly that Stratford's bins are reaching the end of the 'shelf life' with brittle plastic becoming an issue. The life of a bin is generally 10 years. Mrs Araba noted that council is currently reviewing the contract and considering changing the clause regarding bin ownership.
- Councillor Boyde noted his disappointment at a number of issues being brought up were seemingly being ignored. Mr Hanne noted that a large number of issues are related to KPIs and are therefore reported in departmental monthly reports. A number of issues being reported don't warrant a reply such as report on the state of buildings on Broadway. It really depends on the nature of the issue. Some complaints will go to the responsible director while others will go to the contractor.
- Councillor Boyde asked whether full contact details are recorded where a customer goes direct to the service centre. Mr Hanne clarified that the customer can choose to do this.

Roading differential

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Coplestone felt that council needed to take a stand and charge per tonne, per route. Data on tonnage is recorded by the grower and at the port. This is the most logical way of charging. Councillor Coplestone also noted that there would be a natural lull in the next few years and there will not be the forestry vehicles using the roads that we have now.
- Mr Hanne noted that while a per tonnage charge is a logical approach, council has no legal instrument to charge.
- Mrs Radich noted that while a number of submissions supported the proposal, there were considerations such as the cost of implementing and monitoring and enforcing a weigh system. Rates collection is enforceable and can be reviewed annually.
- Mayor Volzke noted that the rating base is being used to apportion charge and we are achieving that by using the capital value of the property. Indirectly you are getting a measure of the logs coming off the property. Responsibility therefore lies with the owner. It is a crude method but is one which reflects the size of the property and tonnage coming off it. He noted that Southland, Wairoa and Ruapehu all operate a capital value rating system. All have a targeted rate for roading and all have a differential for forestry blocks. Each charges by apportioning costs according to property size. It reflects that bigger properties will pay more than smaller properties.
- Councillor Coplestone asked how this applies to a person who grows and mills on their own property. We are considering charging a rate for not travelling on the road.
- Mayor Volzke noted that if QV were classifying as an FE, then they would be captured. Ruapehu used this system. He suggests including it in the rates remission policy.

- Councillor Sandford asked if road closures were possible? Mr Hanne noted that this is just one tool but that road closures would need personnel to monitor. Other users would be negatively impacted. Mr Bowden added that anything over 45 tonne required a permit and restrictions to go over some bridges is an example of imposing limits.
- Mayor Volzke noted that a general theme in the submissions is fairness of paying. Submitters ask why they being singled out. Regarding a hill country block converting to forestry the value drops to about half - the rating component from that property halves because the forestry isn't included in value of property. When you add a differential for roading, the rate still hasn't come up part way to where they were before.
- Mr Bowden noted the \$100,000 bill as a result of damage to the Puniwhakau Road bridge. He noted that there is still a heavy amount of logging coming out of the eastern district through to 2027. Port Taranaki information suggests that the season will commence again in 2040. In Stratford there is still between 8-9000 hectares still to be harvested. One of the issues in determining a levy per tonne, is the age of the trees. He has heard that there is a 1000 acre block in the Puniwhakau area which could take 5 years to get out.
- Mayor Volzke added that not all logging runs on a 25 year cycle. Currently the government through MPI is consulting on forestry across the country. There are other uses being developed for forestry other than timber which means that there will be potential to harvest at 15 years of age – taking whole trees not just branches – for bio fuel. So there may not be a lull at all with earlier harvesting and quick rotation a reality.
- Furthermore, Mayor Volzke noted that the policy also needed to include a provision for an outdated or incorrect classification by QV. Mrs Radich noted that the funding impact statement defines each rate. Land primarily used for forestry is included. She suggests that council do its own investigation to identify the properties in question, if elected members decide to proceed with the differential. She accepts that QV aerial imagery is old and that some properties have been incorrectly classified.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.18pm for a lunch break. Elected members returned to the meeting at 12.49pm.

Submission 1

Mr Vos' submission was noted.

Submission 6

Points noted in discussion:

- Members were satisfied with council's response.
- Mayor Volzke suggested that the submitter receive a response along the lines of – we are looking at ways to deal with waste and there will be changes in the not too distant future.

Submission 14

Points noted in discussion:

- Mayor Volzke noted that this submitters property is not an FE property. The submitter raises an aspect that is a bit different than some of the others – selective logging and different species that have longer rotations. His comments are a good example of why, somewhere in our remissions policy, we must include the ability to consider different forestry blocks in different ways.
- Mr Hanne noted that where a remission is applied, the property may change (use) at a later date. This will need to be covered.

Submission 16

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Erwood saw merit in amalgamation.
- Councillor Coplestone asked if the land around the new pool could potentially be used by the croquet club due to its proximity to the bowling club.
- The Deputy Mayor asked if it is this council's responsibility to establish a sports ground.
- Mr Hanne could see the benefit of croquet leaving where they are if it could mean an expansion of the playground. That option does not need to be in an Annual Plan conversation. If the club were successful in their funding application, they could be given license to occupy any ground council already own. Elected members could consider this. This response will be advised to the club.

Submission 18

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Coplestone noted changes to chemical and spraying times would assist in the control of yellow bristle grass and that the contractor ought to make these changes now to avoid the abundance in growth being experienced in North Taranaki.
- Mr Bowden noted that the roading contractor has received the submission and is towards a resolution.

Submission 19

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Erwood noted his support for a multi-sport facility in the existing pool complex, once decommissioned.

Submission 22:

- Elected members were satisfied with the internal submission.

9. Closing Karakia

D21/40748 Page 228

The closing karakia 'Kia Uruuru Mai' was led by Councillor J M S Erwood.

The meeting closed at 1.12pm.

A L Jamieson
Chairman

Confirmed this 28th day of June 2022.

N C Volzke
District Mayor