

Date: Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 10.30 AM

Venue: Council Chambers, Stratford District Council, 63 Miranda Street, Stratford

Present

The District Mayor N C Volzke (the Chairman), the Deputy Mayor – M McKay, Councillors: S J Beck, G W Boyde, A M C Dudley, J M S Erwood, E E Hall, V R Jones, and W J Sandford.

Via audio visual link: Councillor A K Harris

In attendance

The Chief Executive – Mr S Hanne, the Communications Manager – Ms G Gibson, the Committee Advisor and Executive Assistant – Mrs E Bishop, and one member of the media (Stratford Press)

1. Welcome

The District Mayor welcomed Elected Members, staff and the media to the meeting.

1.1 Opening Karakia D21/40748 Page 4

The opening karakia was read.

1.2 Health and Safety Message D21/26210 Page 5

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

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor C M Tongaawhikau and M J Watt.

Recommendation

THAT the apology be received.

BOYDE/McKAY
Carried
CL/23/123

3. Announcements

The District Mayor noted this Extraordinary Meeting had been called to determine which way Stratford District Council will vote at the upcoming LGNZ special meeting to be held on Monday 11 December 2023.

LGNZ have provided a generic template for this decision report. There has been an update to the motion following pushback from councils to include all five items to be voted on. The recommendation will be updated to reflect this. This change was circulated to all councillors yesterday.

4. Declarations of Members Interest

Elected members to declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest relating to items on this agenda. There were no conflicts of interest declared.

5. Attendance Schedule

The attendance schedule for Ordinary and Extraordinary Council meetings was attached. Councillor Dudley requested her *apology* be amended to *sick* on Tuesday 14 November 2023.

6. Decision Report – Consensus Outcome Paper on the Future By Local Government D23/47938 Page 7

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.

DUDLEY/McKAY
Carried
CL/23/124

2. THAT LGNZ adopt the below parts of **The Future** by **Local Government** (attachment A), and use this as a long-term platform for local government system reform that will be tailored into advocacy material for specific governments:
 1. Section 1 - Build a new system of government that's fit for purpose

VOLZKE/HALL
Carried
CL/23/125

 2. Section 2 - Rebalance the country's tax take between central and local government

BOYDE/ERWOOD
Carried
CL/23/126

 3. Section 3 - Create stronger, more authentic relationships between local government and iwi, hapū and Māori

HALL/McKAY
1 against
Carried
CL/23/127

 4. Section 4 - Align central, regional and local government priorities

DUDLEY/BOYDE
Carried
CL/23/128

 5. Section 5 - Strengthen local democracy and leadership

ERWOOD/SANDFORD
Carried
CL/23/129

Recommended Reason

This is a political decision. Council protocol is that staff generally do not offer an opinion regarding political decisions.

The District Mayor noted the following points:

- The Future for Local Government review commenced back in 2021. Representatives went around the country and did interviews and workshops with councils. The input from these was used to produce the Future for Local Government report.
- Both major political parties have said if there are any changes to be made it needs to be led by local government. As a result of this LGNZ took a direction from councils at the 2023 conference and were asked to produce a consensus report. Any item required 80% of the vote to be included, one example that was omitted due to not getting consensus was lowering the voting age to 16.
- There is no option for amendments to the wording, council either supports or does not support the recommendation as presented.

Points noted in discussion:

Section 1 - Build a new system of government that's fit for purpose

- The Deputy Mayor noted this section was pretty standard and made a lot of sense. She particularly liked the opportunities to test the different ways to deliver things for our communities around the country which would give feedback on ways of looking at different things. She also supported advocating for the Minister of Local Government to be part of cabinet.
- Councillor Harris supported the recommendation. She asked about for examples of the existing institutions referred to on page 17, the District Mayor noted this was likely to be referring to the Department of Internal Affairs but if looking at the role of local government and if it took on more responsibility around housing (as an example) then it would mean Kainga Ora. Councillor Harris noted it was positive to be looking at what is in place rather than forming a whole new body.
- Councillor Hall supported the recommendation and noted she liked the focus on joint work groups with cross party support which will be key for local government to have consistencies moving forward around what our communities will look like and how they are supported.
- The District Mayor noted this recommendation also included moving to a four year term for local government.
- Councillor Boyde noted this recommendation supported more effective working relationships with councils which has been missing for a very long time.
- Councillor Beck noted he did not support the recommendation. He was not happy with a four year term and still supported a three year term. He noted he had not seen anything in this about referendums and asked if they can still be held for certain things? The District Mayor noted this did not discard them but talks about a new system on how councils might do things, however how it will look is yet to be determined. How this looks is not up for discussion, support is just sought for what is in the report.
- Councillor Beck asked if the improving how local government honours and gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi meant co-governance? The District Mayor noted the general desire is to strengthen relationships between iwi and councils and make sure that council honours and gives effect to their Te Tiriti requirements but stops short of co-governance.

Section 2 - Rebalance the country's tax take between central and local government

- The District Mayor noted this recommendation was fundamentally about financing councils into the future. More than 90% of tax goes to the government, and in some countries the split is around 50/50. The suggestion for a good place to start would be giving back GST collected on rates income.
- Councillor Boyde noted his support for this recommendation. He asked if the action for central and local government to work together to develop sustainable infrastructure included roading? And asked if road user charges coming back to the regions was part of it? The District Mayor noted that the conversation around infrastructure had primarily been around roads. This is about how to balance it out and work together.
- Councillor Erwood noted this would give councils some flexibility to get other avenues of rates.
- The Deputy Mayor noted she supported the recommendation. She liked the cabinet reference to consider the funding implications and talk through what this would mean financially for local government. It would provide access to funding but accountability and measures to deliver it well. She noted she was concerned about developing funding arrangements around climate change as she hoped this wouldn't tie council in to having to deliver certain things that are not very Stratford specific.
- Councillor Harris noted she supported the recommendation but that there was no mention of timeframes within this one. What is proposed could be critical especially as councils are talking about their Long Term Plan.

- The District Mayor felt that this was the most important part of these reforms. The current funding model is not sustainable. He noted that asking the government for money will mean councils will have to demonstrate the value they will get out of it, so any application will come with a tag if successful. The Climate Change mitigation and adaptation is growing, especially in flood prone and rising sea level areas, and this would just perpetuate the problem. He felt that this should be asking for more than just the GST on rates to be returned.

Section 3 - Create stronger, more authentic relationships between local government and iwi, hapū and Māori

- The District Mayor noted that this recommendation was the one which wraps up the work around Te Tiriti obligations, strengthening relationships and giving effect to the Treaty.
- Councillor Hall noted it was important to move forward with this. Council has built the relationships with iwi and hapu locally and Stratford is in a good position to maintain and build those relationships going forward. There needs to be more capability for councils and iwi to engage in those relationships nationwide. Councils are legislatively required to engage with iwi and hapu on a number of aspects of council business but there isn't always the resource to do this, particularly within iwi. She noted this engagement had been done at the wrong time in the past as well. This recommendation will strengthen and broaden the relationships and this can only be a positive thing for the community.
- The Deputy Mayor noted that a strong partnership and consistencies across the country between councils and iwi would be a powerful relationship. It would be a nice cohesion that links councils into māori culture and values which would benefit everyone if the focus is on the land, air and environment. She liked that it specifically states te ao Māori values as there are some cool things in the cultural space that could be incorporated into what council does to the benefit of everyone.
- Councillor Boyde noted the actions included introducing statutory requirements for what council is doing anyway so he did not see too much of a change. Prioritising investment and development in certain areas was very broad.
- Councillor Beck noted he struggled with this one and felt it was dividing a community. He would be voting against this recommendation.
- Councillor Jones felt putting this into statutory requirements would hamstring ourselves as if we can't follow it would be a downfall. It is an unknown for him.
- Councillor Boyde asked if it was currently statutory requirements to have the relationship with iwi and consult on anything council does? The Chief Executive noted that various statutes require council to engage with iwi/māori at certain points of the consultation. There is no requirement to have an ongoing relationship but it would be counterproductive to not do this. The fundamental flaw is when council speaks to iwi at the end of a project and he noted projects had much better outcomes when they have been spoken with at the beginning. The intent of this aligns with what council is already trying to achieve.
- Councillor Jones noted that with the last election there was a big drive away from too much legislation. If there were more statutory requirements was it going against what everyone has voted for? If it is put in writing then council has to do it and if it goes wrong then council will be on the back foot. Especially for something council could potentially do itself and do better.
- Councillor Beck noted there was no indication where the funding for māori engagement would be coming from.
- The District Mayor reminded council that this was to form the vision of LGNZ to then be presented to government. Overall this was trying to recognise there is a huge range and variations of relationships between iwi and councils. The intent, and where it has worked in practice in Taranaki, has seen great outcomes. He supported the recommendation.
- The Deputy Mayor reminded council of the work that has been done in this space. She could not think of an example where council has partnered with iwi from the get go and the outcome has not been positive. She felt it would be confusing if council did not support this and that not supporting it would communicate that council was not happy with our relationships in that space. In practice, and in reality, this work has brought this council and the region some very positive outcomes.
- Councillor Harris agreed that there has been some marvellous work out of the partnership with iwi in our region with very positive outcomes.
- Councillor Beck noted that people who want to do good will do good. There is a difference between intent and statutory requirements and when you are made to do something it is different.

Section 4 - Align central, regional and local government priorities

- The District Mayor noted that this recommendation gave effect to regional packages and provided a mechanism to allow central government and local government to work together while having a regional plan to ensure everyone is working in a cohesive way. Different regions will have different regional plans.
- Councillor Boyde noted there were benefits in the synergies of this proposal but noted his concern for some areas for a regional approach but acknowledged overall there could be huge benefits in this. It will be great to explore and move forward with this.
- Councillor Hall noted this was an excellent example of bringing localism back into the conversation and that she really liked the regional component as this was already a strength with such good regional relationships in Taranaki. She noted the Waka Kotahi representative who had spoken at the New Plymouth District Council earlier this year and had said when councils are going for funding they are going up against national priorities versus local needs and she felt it was so wrong that these two could clash. Central government is elected to represent their local communities and something has been lost along the way.
- Councillor Beck noted this is what has been lacking. Instruction coming straight out of Wellington, such as the median barriers from Hawera to New Plymouth but they are not wanted here.
- Councillor Erwood supported the recommendations and agreed it would be good to get some cohesion amongst all the organisations.
- Councillor Jones noted it was interesting that this recommendation was the only one that did not have any specific actions and felt it was quite general and easy to accept.
- The District Mayor noted that when central government are looking into investing in the region their go to point is the Taranaki Mayoral Forum to see if there is regional support, however in some regions the mayoral forums are quite disjointed. Formalising a process that allows our region and the government to have a common set of rules and priorities will make it easier to work to a collective plan.

Section 5 - Strengthen local democracy and leadership

- Councillor Erwood noted his support for this recommendation to get more people voting. More people showing interest with more interest in the community will help with the decision making. He noted he was disappointed the voting age had not been included in this.
- Councillor Sandford noted more people voting would give a better idea of what our community wants. He noted more community engagement would be wonderful.
- The District Mayor noted the voting age had not been included as there had been no consensus on this in the earlier conversations. He also noted that both major political parties had committed to pursuing this matter.
- Councillor Hall supported the recommendation, particularly how this would try to create the same standard around promotion of elections which she felt would have a big impact on engagement. She also noted her support for the investment in civic education in schools to help our young people learn and be confident in making their decisions.
- Councillor Harris noted this was a great opportunity to explore the civic education as it has been raised with her before. This will enable our communities to understand the processes within local government and help promote opportunities with local government which will lead to a great selection of candidates for the community to elect onto council.
- The District Mayor noted that referendums were addressed in this section. Councillor Beck noted he would like to see this broadened to include referendums specifically.
- It was clarified that at the moment there is a set of standards that councils are required to adhere to when running an election but the specifics vary between councils. If the electoral commission was doing it then they would design and set a standard right across the country.

General

- The District Mayor noted that Stratford District Council would vote in support of all five recommendations at the meeting next week. He reiterated there were no amendments or alterations and did not think there would be any debate.
- Councillor Hall asked if there had been any engagement or support around these processes with the new Minister of Local Government? The District Mayor noted the LGNZ President had met with the Minister but he did not think this was discussed as councils were still forming their views on the recommendations. If approved it will be made into a business case and then promoted to government.

7. Questions

There were no questions.

8. Closing Karakia

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The closing karakia was read.

The meeting closed at 11.28am.

N C Volzke
Chairman

Confirmed this 12th day of December 2023.

N C Volzke
District Mayor