

MINUTES

Policy and Services Committee

F22/55/05 – D24/15493

Date: Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 3.00pm
Venue: Council Chambers, 63 Miranda Street, Stratford

Present

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

In attendance

The Chief Executive – Mr S Hanne, the Director – Assets Mrs V Araba, the Director – Corporate Services – Mrs T Radich, the Director – Environmental Services – Mr B Sutherland, the Communications Manager – Ms G Gibson, the Committee Advisor and Executive Assistant – Mrs E Bishop, the Parks and Reserve Officer – Mrs M McBain (*part meeting*), the Communications Advisor – Mrs S Clarkson (*part meeting*), the Workforce Coordinator – Ms S Vega (*part meeting*), the Revenue Manager – Ms K Lawrence (*part meeting*), the Projects Manager – Mr S Taylor (*part meeting*), the Property Officer – Mrs S Flight (*part meeting*), the Graduate Asset Engineer – Ms K van Hout (*part meeting*), the Services Asset Manager – Mr J Cooper (*part meeting*), and one member of the media (Stratford Press).

1. Welcome

The opening karakia was read.

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

An apology was received from Councillor C M Tongaawhikau and noted from the Director – Community Services – Ms K Whareaitu.

Recommendation

THAT the apologies be received.

DUDLEY/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/24/90

3. Announcements

There were no announcements.

4. Declarations of members interest

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

5. Attendance Schedule

The Attendance schedule for Policy and Services Committee meetings, including Hearings, was attached.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

6.1 Policy and Services Committee –27 February 2024 (Hearing) D24/7502 Page 10

Recommendation

THAT the minutes of the Policy and Services Committee Meeting, to hear and consider submissions to the Draft Easter Sunday Shop Trading Policy, held on Tuesday 27 February 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

HALL/WATT
Carried
P&S/24/91

The Committee Advisor and Executive Assistant undertook to make the following amendment:

- Page 12, third bullet point, last sentence amend *true* to *untrue*.

6.2 Policy and Services Committee –27 February 2024 D24/7501 Page 14

Recommendation

THAT the minutes of the Policy and Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 27 February 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

HARRIS/JONES
Carried
P&S/24/92

7. Matters Outstanding

D16/47 Page 30

Recommendation

THAT the Matters Outstanding be received.

SANDFORD/McKAY
Carried
P&S/24/93

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.

HARRIS/ERWOOD
Carried
P&S/24/94

- ~~2. THAT the following updated policies, being the:~~

- ~~1. Rates Remission Policy~~
- ~~2. Rates Postponement Policy~~

~~be approved to be released for public consultation as required under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 2002, giving effect to Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2002.~~

Recommended Reason

Policies require review from time to time to ensure they still reflect current legislation and best practice, as well as elected members' views and meet the business needs of the organisation. These policies must go out for public consultation before any amendments can be adopted, as required by legislation.

The Revenue Manager noted the following points:

- The Rating Act requires council to adopt a rates remission or a rates postponement policy, or both.
- The Rates Remission Policy covers all four well-beings with the Rates Postponement Policy falling in the social well-being.
- These policies have been built after receiving feedback from a number of sources, including properties affected by the forestry differential rate.
- The remaining changes are mainly administrative.

The Services Asset Manager joined the meeting at 4.04pm.

Rates Remission

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- Councillor Beck noted the 100% rates remission for forestry situated on the state highway. He requested this be removed as these properties will still be accessing local roads such as Skinner Road or Beaconsfield Road, to transport the logs.
- Mrs Radich clarified that the councils she is aware of that have this kind of differential or targeted rate for forestry do not have a remission for them. She noted these suggestions had come through from feedback received from forestry owners.
- The Deputy Mayor questioned if council investigates leaks prior to approving the remission for excess water consumption and if there had been circumstances where these have been declined? Mr Hanne noted that a statement from a plumber is required and it usually is a broken pipe, he noted that requests have been refused especially if it is a reoccurring event and the issues with the infrastructure have not been comprehensively addressed.
- It was clarified that properties need to apply for the remission, such as due to fire, and that the rate charges would be reinstated after two years.

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Boyde noted that Beaconsfield Road is used by logging trucks all the time and therefore if a property is on state highway it is still having an impact and creating issues on local country roads. He agreed that he had an issue with this condition and the criteria and would like to see it removed. Councillor Hall supported removing this.
- Councillor Erwood suggested all three conditions and criteria be removed. He noted other councils did not have anything relating to this in their policies and did not feel like Stratford should be an exception to this. Councillor Harris and Councillor Boyde supported removing all three.

- It was acknowledged that some properties were planted in forestry for carbon credits. Mr Hanne noted the property owner could change their mind and there would be no mechanism to get the missed rates differential back, however removing this condition could unfairly affect those who have no intention to harvest.
- The District Mayor agreed that the first and second bullets should be removed. The logging trucks do use our local roads but he noted sympathy for those affected by removing the third bullet. The original purpose of this rate was to recover costs caused by damage from the logging trucks. Most exotic forestry is on a 25 year rotation, however the person who has a 50 year rotation will be paying the same maintenance fee but for 50 years so will be paying twice the amount of the 25 year rotation.

Recommendation

THAT the Rates Remission Policy be approved to be released for public consultation as required under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 2002, giving effect to Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2002, *with the removal of the first two bullets under Conditions and Criteria of section 16 – Rate Remission Policy for Roding Targeted Rate – Forestry.*

HALL/BECK
Withdrawn

- The District Mayor suggested the remission for business development (section 6 – Remission for Promoting Business Development) should be increased to \$1,000,000.

Recommendations

- a) THAT cost of development be increased to \$1,000,000 in section 6 – Remission for Promoting Business Development

VOLZKE/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/24/95

- b) THAT the first bullet point under conditions and criteria (section 16 – Rates Remission Policy for Roding Targeted Rate – Forestry) be removed.

BECK/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/24/96

- c) THAT the second bullet point under conditions and criteria (section 16 – Rates Remission Policy for Roding Targeted Rate – Forestry) be removed.

HARRIS/BECK
Carried
P&S/24/97

- d) THAT the third bullet point under conditions and criteria (section 16 – Rates Remission Policy for Roding Targeted Rate – Forestry) be removed.

BECK/BOYDE
2 against
Carried
P&S/24/98

- Councillor Harris noted that councillors did not know if the tonnage grown on a 50 year harvest rotation was the same, or if it could grow double the tonnage. She was not supportive of it remaining unless further information was provided. Mrs Radich noted this information would be hard to compile and that these property owners could also choose to harvest within the 50 year rotation as well.
- Councillor Jones noted that council had been waiting years to bring in the targeted rate and now this was providing ways to get out of paying it. Councillor Sandford agreed noting that this had taken a long time to get this.

Recommendations

2. THAT the Rates Remission Policy be approved to be released for public consultation as required under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 2002, giving effect to Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2002, *with the removal of section 16 – Rate Remission Policy for Roading Targeted Rate – Forestry and an increase to the business development costs (section 6 – remission to for promoting business development) to \$1,000,000*

BOYDE/DUDLEY
Carried
P&S/24/99

The Director – Corporate Services and the Revenue Manager left the meeting at 4.27pm.

Rates Postponement

Points noted in discussion:

- The District Mayor felt that the conditions noting aged 65 and over, or aged 65 and under were contradictory as this covered everyone. He felt the policy shouldn't be based on age as it should be based on need. He also noted that under conditions it referenced age, disability, injury, illness or family circumstances. He noted that the onus was on the person applying to demonstrate extreme financial hardship, and not for the policy to require judgement on their age or physical/mental situation and rejected the references to these throughout the policy. Councillor Hall agreed noting that the definition of extreme hardship should be all that is to be proven.

The Parks and Reserves Officer left the meeting at 4.33pm.

- The Deputy Mayor noted that having recently gone through this process the word extreme needed to be emphasised throughout the policy. It can't be defined as it will be different for every person but it does need to be clearer in the policy that it is for extreme hardship. She did not think council should be getting a third party assessment (clause 3 – conditions) as the application should be the end product for the situation and this should be removed. She also noted there was no reference in the policy that this was a temporary solution as rates could not be postponed forever. She requested applicants be required to specify a timeframe to show there is a plan in place, but that council could choose to accept that timeframe or suggest a change. She also felt that confirmation should be provided by the applicant to show they have accessed all possible means in their situation such as mortgage holidays, hardship with the bank, accessing kiwisaver or WINZ etc. She also noted that not being able to work is significantly different to someone who currently not work and therefore the earning capacity is very different.
- The District Mayor felt the formal application requiring a budget advisor was too high of an expectation. He stated that it was rare for people to apply to this policy and it should be used sparingly.
- Councillor Hall felt a checklist needed to be included to know they have done everything to be considered. She noted it was very vulnerable to ask for support so it was important to make this as easy as possible for the appropriate people to access it, save time for staff and help keep the applicants integrity as well.

The Parks and Reserves Officer re-joined the meeting at 4.41pm.

- Councillor Beck noted this was not a remission policy, purely a postponement policy, and therefore it didn't need to be long winded as it would only be for that little period of time with the rates picked up at the end.

Proposed Changes:

- Expectation to provide a business plan for the recovery of the farm.
- Applicant to specify the timeframe for the postponement up front requiring demonstration of what the next plan is.
- Remove the ability for council to question through a third party with the expectation the applicant will provide that information up front.
- Demonstration that all other means available have been exhausted (bank, kiwisaver WINZ etc).
- Demonstrate they are physically not able to work.

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Hall noted her concern that this policy was setting people up to fail later by only being a postponement. The Deputy Mayor noted this was the reason she was requested further criteria. Mr Hanne clarified this did mean the property owner was not being struck with penalties or the beginning of legal proceedings. It was the expectation that this would be cleared in the year after the postponement date – this is to be added to the policy.

The Services Asset manager left the meeting at 4.48pm.

- The District Mayor asked if council should have this policy at all. It was only put there for extreme financial hardship and a property owner in hardship could not pay their rates and faced losing their property.
- Councillor Hall noted when coming out of the extreme financial hardship she was not sure people would be in the situation to pay the rates. The Deputy Mayor clarified this was to allow a bit of space and time during a hard time, she noted her expectation was that the property owner needed to have something in place by the end of this period or they needed to make a decision around the ownership of the property.

The Communications Advisor left the meeting at 4.50pm.

- Councillor Harris questioned what triggers this policy. Mr Hanne noted that it does arise as an option for the rates officers when they see people struggling with their bills. The District Mayor noted this is the last resort before they start incurring penalties. Councillor Erwood felt that not receiving penalties would put people at ease.
- Mr Hanne noted this policy had only been used once since he became Chief Executive and that application was declined.
- Councillor Beck noted the ability to work could exclude farmers as they may have the ability to work but there is no money coming in.

Recommendation

THAT the Rates Postponement Policy be withdrawn.

SANDFORD/WATT
Withdrawn

- The District Mayor asked councillors if they would make provision for hardship based on natural disaster because of their financial position? Or wanted to withdraw the whole policy. He noted that there had been no applications after the 2015 floods.
- Councillor Boyde noted by withdrawing the full policy there will be no option. Mr Hanne confirmed most councils do have a postponement policy but what is contained in them varies. Councillor Boyde did not support the motion.
- Councillor Hall agreed that this would be the mechanism to help ratepayers in a natural disaster.
- Councillor Sandford noted there were a lot of farmers in strife after the 2015 floods, however they didn't want this policy as there were no applications. The only application that has been received was declined. He did not think council should be a social organisation when there are so many agencies out there to help people. He noted he would support the policy if there had been a demand for it. He withdrew his motion for the withdrawal of the policy.
- The District Mayor suggested the policy be amended to only be a postponement for areas affected by natural disasters and available for anyone affected by natural disaster. Councillor Boyde supported this.

Recommendation

THAT the Rates Postponement Policy be

- Amended to be titled the Rates Postponement due to Natural Disasters.
- Remove all except for section 4 (Postponement for Farmland Affected by Natural Disasters)
- Amend all farming references to include all ratepayers.

and approved to be released for public consultation as required under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 2002, giving effect to Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2002.

SANDFORD/WATT
Carried
P&S/24/99

9. Decision Report – Policy Review – Housing for Older Persons

D24/12243

Page 52

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.

ERWOOD/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/24/100

Recommended Reason

This policy is being reviewed as part of council's rolling review of policies. Policies require review from time to time to ensure they still reflect current legislation and best practice, as well as elected members' views and meet the business needs of the organisation.

The Chief Executive noted that this policy had been presented to the last Policy and Services Committee meeting. The committee had requested further information which was provided at a workshop and the feedback then incorporated into the policy presented today.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- Councillor Boyde supported the policy but questioned the duration of the transition period to the target rent. He noted that discussions had supported a five year transition period. Mr Hanne clarified the resolution asked councillors to set the three items specified.

Recommendations

- 2a. THAT the Housing for Older Persons Policy Target Rent to be set as 75% of market rental rate

JONES/BECK
3 against
Carried
P&S/24/101

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Jones supported changing the targeted rent to be 75% of the market rental rate as it had been confirmed that this would meet the required revenue.
- The Deputy Mayor spoke against the resolution as this exercise had been undertaken for cost recovery to a certain level while maintaining the social element. She felt with rising costs it was a

good idea to meet the current costs which will continue to change. Councillor Jones noted that as a percentage of the market rental rate the rent will increase as the market rate rises to meet costs.

Recommendations

- 2b. THAT the Housing for Older Persons Policy duration of transition period for existing tenants from current rent to target rent to be set at 5 years;

BECK/BOYDE
Carried
P&S/24/102

Points noted in discussion:

- Councillor Dudley supported amending the transition period to five years.

Recommendations

- 2c. THAT the Housing for Older Persons Policy Rental charge applicable to new tenants to be full Target Rent

BOYDE/BECK
Carried
P&S/24/103

Points noted in discussion:

- The District Mayor supported the motion as it will be a useful gauge when a vacancy occurs if there is consumer demand at the new rates.
- Councillor Hall requested if the information could be presented on how many declines are received when there is a vacancy as this is quite a different policy. Mr Hanne noted this would be indicated in the monthly report through vacancies. If officers are struggling to fill a vacancy this would be the trigger to raise the issue with councillors.
- Mr Hanne noted this policy had a short review time as it was a new policy but suggested a five year review period after the first review. The recovery element for the reserve will slowly come back up. Councillor Harris noted her awareness on the impact of these units on the wider rate payer base.

Recommendations

2. THAT the Housing for Older Persons Policy (replacing the Housing for the Elderly Policy) be adopted

HALL/VOLZKE
Carried
P&S/24/104

Points noted in discussion:

- Clause 2.2 to be amended to: *Be able to live independently. This implies an active and independent lifestyle.*

10. Monthly Reports

10.1 Assets Report D24/7676 Page 82

Recommendation

THAT the report be received.

BOYDE/HARRIS
Carried
P&S/24/105

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- It was questioned if the bridges cleared (page 84) were inspections or what was cleared?
- It was clarified that councillors had requested information on any potential overspends to the end of the financial year. The information provided on page 86 indicates that this activity will overspend by \$600,000, or savings could be made by cutting down on maintenance.
- Councillor Boyde noted it had taken 15 days to receive the traffic management plan to repair a water leak on Broadway and asked if this is standard practice with NZTA and state highways? Mr Hanne noted that they will differentiate if it is an emergency or not, however a slow leak is not treated as an emergency. The District Mayor noted he would raise this issue with the Regional Transport Committee as 15 days was too long to wait for a traffic management plan.
- It was clarified that the change in stocking numbers on the farm will be from October when mating is finished. This is as advised by the farm consultant.
- It was clarified that the hydrology report at Victoria Park will look at why the drainage work for field 1 had not performed to the expected level and help understand the issues that have now arisen on field 2. It is not normal practice to undertake these surveys but the need has now arisen for this area.
- It was clarified that the replacement of showerheads at the pool were due to damage and vandalism.
- Councillor Dudley questioned whether the contractors had been refusing to pick up the recycling bins with the replaced yellow lids. Mrs Araba clarified that the change of bin lids was part of the new contract but that they should still be collected. Councillor Dudley noted the kerbside collection contamination report was really good.
- The District Mayor noted the serious implications with the waste water ponds being considered a dam. He asked if this would lead to requirements to strengthen and replace the walls? Mrs Araba noted that council has a duty to maintain its infrastructure but it won't require a whole wall being replaced. Officers will be looking to see what is required to be done.
- Councillor Erwood suggested an audible alarm be used in the public toilets to deter vandalism.

The Parks and Reserves Officer, Property Officer and Projects Manager left the meeting at 5.33pm.

10.2 Community Services Report D24/7529 Page 109

Recommendation

THAT the report be received.

DUDLEY/HARRIS
Carried
P&S/24/106

Points noted in discussion:

- It was clarified that the numbers attending the programme and events in the Visitor Information and Library table had not changed from the previous month.
- Councillor Sandford congratulated the Community Development Officer for the recent Positive Ageing Forum which had a marvellous turn out. He thanked council for ensuring those forums continue.

- The District Mayor noted that there had been some questions raised about the MTFJ programme where the key performance indicators were not telling the full story of the achievements. The Workforce Coordinator gave an update on the clarifications of these KPIs and noted that part time or casual employment opportunities did not meet the criteria. She noted there had been 11 placements that had not met the specified criteria. She noted there had been 122 job seekers registered with council since 1 July 2023 and 12 businesses. It was clarified that these are so prescriptive as the funding is from the Ministry of Social Development. It is likely that there will be less funding received due to not meeting the targets.

The Workforce Coordinator left the meeting at 5.41pm.

10.3 Environmental Services Report

D24/5324 Page 117

Recommendation

THAT the report be received.

DUDLEY/McKAY
Carried
P&S/24/107

The Director – Environmental Services noted that officers have been gathering information for the general non compliances identified during the BCA audit last year. All these have now been submitted and two of the four GNCs cleared.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- It was noted there has been no recent feedback received from the earthquake prone building owners. The reports are coming in slowly.

10.4 Corporate Services Report

D24/10165 Page 124

Recommendation

THAT the report be received.

BECK/JONES
Carried
P&S/24/108

The Chief Executive noted that as requested by elected members, this report contains a stocktake of all activities that were going over budget and why that is and whether it is temporary or seasonal over budget.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- Councillor Harris noted that revenue was down for resource consents and asked if that meant expenditure that is incurred would be down or is stranded? Mr Sutherland noted it was a bit of both but that a lot of the costs is staffing.
- It was clarified that the water supply consumption charge was \$90,000 less than budgeted, this is a user driven charge which means there is less going through those properties that are metered than anticipated. The District Mayor noted that the consumption charges tend to be weighted towards the end of the financial year as the properties are still working within the allocated base amount.
- It was clarified that the healthy homes upgrade in solid waste was related to the dwelling at the transfer station.

11. Questions

There were no questions.

12. Closing Karakia

D21/40748

Page 142

The closing karakia was read.

The meeting closed at 5.48pm

M McKay
Chairman

Confirmed this 23rd day of April 2024.

N C Volzke
District Mayor