

Minutes of a meeting of the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee of the Waikato District Council held in the Council Chambers, District Office, 15 Galileo Street, Ngaruawahia on **WEDNESDAY, 17 MAY 2023** commencing at **9.36AM**.

**Present:**

Cr L Thomson (Chairperson)  
Her Worship the Mayor, Mrs JA Church  
Cr C Beavis  
Cr C Eyre  
Cr M Raumati  
Cr V Reeve - *via audio visual conference*  
Cr L Thomson  
Cr T Turner  
Cr D Whyte

**Attending:**

Mr G Ion (Chief Executive)  
Ms A Diaz (Chief Financial Officer)  
Mr K Abbott (Executive Manager – Projects & Innovation)  
Ms J Dolan (Economic and Community Development Manager)  
Ms R Goddard (Climate Action & Sustainability Manager)  
Ms D Tracey (Strategic Planning Team Leader)  
Mr J Fuller (Senior Environmental Planner)  
Ms M Speedy (People Business Partner)  
Ms D Thurlow (Community-Led Development Advisor)  
Ms G Shaw (Democracy Advisor)

**Guests**

Ms F Rhodes (Tauwhare Community Committee) - *via audio visual conference*

Cr Raumati opened the meeting with a Karakia.

**APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Resolved: (Crs Patterson/Raumati)**

**THAT the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee accepts the apologies from:**

- a. Crs Gibb, Keir, Ngataki and P Thomson for non-attendance.**

**CARRIED**

**S&W2305/01**

## **CONFIRMATION OF STATUS OF AGENDA ITEMS**

**Resolved: (Her Worship the Mayor, Mrs JA Church/Cr Beavis)**

**THAT:**

- a. the agenda for a meeting of the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee held on Wednesday, 17 May 2023 be confirmed; and
- b. all items therein be considered in open meeting, with the exception of those items detailed at agenda item 7, which shall be considered with the public excluded; and
- c. all reports be received.

**CARRIED**

**S&W2305/02**

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**Resolved: (Crs Raumati/Turner)**

**THAT:**

- a. the minutes for a meeting of the Sustainability & Wellbeing Committee held on Wednesday, 5 April 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record of that meeting, noting an amendment bullet four (4) on page 11 and noting that Cr Eyre was present; and
- b. the minutes of a meeting of the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee Hearings Panel held on Tuesday, 18 April 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

**CARRIED**

**S&W2305/03**

## **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

## **ACTIONS REGISTER**

Agenda Item 5

The report was received [*S&W2305/02 refers*] and no discussion was held.

## **REPORTS**

### Application to the Rural Ward Fund Agenda Item 6.1

The report was received [S&W2305/02 refers] and the Community-Led Development Advisor spoke to the report. The following items were discussed:

- It was clarified that Community Boards (CBs) and two (2) Community Committees (CCs) had a pool of discretionary funds. There was a separate rural ward fund for those outside these groups.
- Tauwhare Transmitter - a newsletter which had been produced since 1975 was considered an important rural communication carrier for the local community which brings the community together.
- Ms Rhodes noted that the majority of the community preferred a printed copy. Funding towards the cost of continuing to provide printed copies was being sought.
- While Committee members were supportive of the application, some raised concerns about outdated guidelines for funding and the need for equity across the district.
- Staff noted that work had been underway, in collaboration with community boards and community committees, to update the funding guidelines.

**ACTION:** Community Led Development team to provide Councillors with updated discretionary fund and rural ward fund guidelines and application processes.

- It was noted that the annual budget for the Rural Ward Fund is \$39,000. Staff agreed there was a need to revise the guidelines and review the support given to smaller community committees.
- It was noted that the long-term prospects of sustaining the newsletter and communication lines remained uncertain. Different models would be investigated to ensure resilience and sustainability for these kinds of local publications throughout the district.
- It was suggested that staff could look at bringing together various committees and hall committees to discuss these issues more comprehensively.
- The Committee also raised concerns about the minimal amount of money available to support smaller community committees, which had not been updated to reflect inflation.
- Overall, staff and councillors recognised the importance of rural communication and the need to support it as a whole.

**ACTION:** Staff to provide Councillors with information regarding the financial support available to small community committees throughout the district, and how financial or other available support can be accessed by those groups.

**Resolved: (Crs Beavis/Eyre)**

**THAT the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee:**

- a. **approves an allocation of \$800.00 (excl. GST) from the Rural Ward fund to:**
  - i. **Tauwhare Community Committee to support the publication of the community newsletter, the Tauwhare Transmitter, in 2023.**

**CARRIED**

**S&W2305/04**

Economic and Community Led Development Work Programme Update  
Agenda Item 6.2

The report was received [S&W2305/02 refers] and the Economic and Community Development Manager spoke to the report. The following items were discussed:

- The Economic and Community Development team aimed to ensure that Councillors receive reports with no surprises (i.e., Councillors would have already been briefed and communicated with prior to reports on various topics in this work stream being presented in meeting agendas).
- The regional placemaking forum had been set up recently, and there had been good buy-in from various communities.
- Collaborating with the Maaori community was discussed and there was recognition of the need to further educate ourselves on how to improve our work in this space.
- Efforts had been made to view matters through a rural lens to help staff to better comprehend the needs of the people they serve. Councillors were encouraged to connect with the Economic and Community Development team that manages the Work Programme to raise any concerns or questions.
- The Committee emphasised the need for smart and innovative growth based on the four pillars (social, economic, environmental, and cultural) and the importance of channelling information to the team/s responsible.
- It was noted that the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee may benefit from adding a standing PEX item to its agenda each meeting cycle. There was a suggestion that this report could be titled something along the lines of: 'Sensitive Commercial Matters'.

**ACTION:** Staff to consider adding a standing PEX report (regarding sensitive commercial matters) to the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee agendas going forward.

- It was important to note that there were several avenues through which investors could approach Council and we must be careful not to restrict their access.

- Discussion touched on solar farms, which sometimes attracted opposition from the public. Some Councillors noted that we do not want to be overly prescriptive gatekeepers as to how people use their land. It is imperative to strike a balance between addressing valid concerns and not serving as a hindrance to innovation.
- In the case of Raglan, the wind farm initially drew a lot of criticism, but people eventually adapted to its presence.
- A point was raised, noting it was important to ensure that we are comfortable with where opportunities are heading. While Council were not directly responsible for aspects of what was in place, they must remain vigilant and mindful of any implications.
- It was noted that Mercer was a small community with a population of fewer than 200 residents. Councillors were set to attend an upcoming workshop prompted by an economic development opportunity in the area. There was an acknowledgement that Council sought to foster a holistic approach to conducting business, with an aim to bring together various departments with cross-functional implications and promote transparency in decision-making processes.
- Discussion focused on finding ways to increase capacity for small to medium enterprises by building suitable infrastructure in communities and promoting business sustainability. Interest was expressed in gaining more information around Council's strategy on this topic and advocating for SMEs.
- To achieve this goal, there were suggestions that Council could evaluate available properties and encourage both Community Committees (CCs) and Community Boards (CBs) to consider the four pillars of wellbeing - social, economic, cultural, and environmental - when making decisions.
- Additionally, there was a proposal for a stronger focus on reporting economic and cultural activities to these groups to support a transition towards a more supportive role for small businesses.

**ACTION:** Staff to provide Councillors with information regarding Council's strategy to grow capacity (in terms of buildings/structures) for local communities and small businesses. Councillors were also interested in how they could provide advocacy for small businesses in their wards.

- One consideration that was raised related to how Council partners with Maaori. It was felt that Council viewed Maaori as holding a distinct cultural identity and questioned if Council was looking into ways to engage with Maaori effectively. It was acknowledged that there was a learning curve involved with this endeavor.
- A Maaori voice and narrative was an important focus of any collaborative work undertaken. This approach would benefit all parties involved. Additionally, it was envisioned this collaborative effort would be an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the heritage of the Waikato people, which would serve as a meaningful and valuable contribution to society.

- The importance of viewing this line of work through a rural lens was discussed. It was noted that the Rural Advisory Panel sought to take into consideration the unique needs and challenges of rural communities. The panel had a high-level focus, and included Mana Whenua representatives, who provided a valuable perspective. Ongoing discussions had been held to support staff in gaining a better understanding of rural communities' needs, ensuring that their work was effective and relevant.

### Climate Action Progress Update 2023

#### Agenda Item 6.3

The report was received [S&W2305/02 refers] and the Climate Action & Sustainability Manager spoke to the report. The following items were discussed:

- There had been an objective to establish a think tank that would assemble key strategic thinkers with the intention of undertaking a mapping exercise. This would be an initial step where the participants would begin to construct a map of ideas. A workshop would follow to further develop those ideas.
- The Climate Response and Resiliency Strategy had been drafted and focus groups had been established to provide feedback on the strategy.
- The Green House Gas Inventory saw a reduction in emissions in the last financial year.
- Staff provided information regarding the integration of electric vehicles (EVs) in the Council's fleet. As it pertained to Council fleet vehicles, enquiries were made regarding the cost benefit and pay back of EVs. It was acknowledged that EVs come with a higher price tag; however, the government had conducted a cost-benefit analysis on the matter and recommended that Council continue to explore and plan for the transition to EVs. It was also noted that EVs were comparatively low maintenance vehicles.
- It was queried that, in consideration of our efforts towards climate action, was Council adequately factoring in the impact on the rural economy and its inhabitants? It was noted that the previously established climate steering group had dissolved with the formation of the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee. The current climate advisory group consisted solely of staff members. Therefore, it would be beneficial to seek input from the community during think tank sessions.
- It was noted that in order to continue making progress in percentages, it was becoming increasingly challenging to identify new areas for improvement. However, Council may still consider exploring alternative options, such as LED streetlights and public lighting. Another potential area to focus on was sports field lighting as there were various viable LED solutions available. A review of flood lighting throughout the district had not yet taken place, and this would be a constructive step to undertake.
- Staff acknowledged that electricity was one of the highest contributors to CO2 emissions. As such, staff were waiting for an update on this matter and would take necessary action in the next report. It was hoped that relevant staff would be able to provide an update on this stocktake in the near future.

**ACTION:** Staff to provide Councillors with an update on the stocktake of streetlight/public lighting (e.g., were LED options being utilised where possible).

- It was noted that the above lighting issue would be brought to an upcoming Infrastructure Committee meeting, and budgets, plans and other relevant points would be discussed.
- A point was raised regarding the previously discussed think tank and the opportunity to engage with Maaori in this process. Specifically, to what extent Council was open to including Maaori in the upcoming process.
- Staff confirmed that it was hoped that the approach to the strategy would involve a comprehensive incorporation of Maaori culture throughout. It made sense to align scientific and Maaori cultural theories in order to complement and enhance one another.
- It was noted that a significant proportion of the waste deposited at the Hampton Downs Landfill was not generated by the district. However, as the waste was dumped within the district, it was considered the district's responsibility. To address this situation and achieve greater accountability, implementing a source-based measurability reporting system was suggested.
- Noted that while other waste statistics in the area were also not directly attributable to the district, they still had an impact on the district.
- It was confirmed that the Hampton Downs Landfill (dump) was managed by Enviro Waste, meaning Council does not collect data related to this site for their reporting purposes. A Committee member suggested the need for greater clarity on the tracking of waste data related to the Hampton Downs Landfill.
- The focus of the framework development turned to wetlands, particularly in the context of our region's growth. It was noted that we had the second largest wetlands area in the North Island, and building on these sites may have significant impact, which was a concern.
- As the Waikato region is a basin, our wetlands are critical in terms of environmental and community protection. There was a need to understand the implications of further development of wetlands for the next two to three decades, especially given the increasing frequency of weather events. Protecting our communities was a priority and required careful consideration of our available resources.
- Staff acknowledged that wetlands were a valuable resource that we could not afford to lose and their importance could not be overstated. Legal constraints govern our work, such as the Resource Management Act (RMA) and the Climate Change Adaptation Act, which was yet to be released. Despite these limitations, it was crucial that we focus on planning for the future and gather this information.

## Emergency Management Update

### Agenda Item 6.4

The report was received [*S&W2305/02 refers*] and the Emergency Management Advisor spoke to the report. The following items were discussed:

- The emergency operations centre was recently activated due to another weather event and the Committee was advised that Council were expecting another front to arrive from the west within the next week.
- The community response plan had strong support from the elected members, with 49 communities showing interest in having a response plan.

## Amended Draft Taiao in the Waikato Strategy

### Agenda Item 6.5

The report was received [*S&W2304/02 refers*] and the following items were discussed:

- Staff presented an amended version of the Taiao in the Waikato Strategy, noting there were tracked changes to illustrate that amendments had been made and some sections had been moved around based on submissions received and discussion with the deliberations panel.
- The document had been slimmed down by removing commentary, all of which was in compliance with the submissions received. Discussions were held about ensuring the changes made were legal, and clarity was sought around drafting.
- This was the first draft that the new governing body would adopt, and it underwent an extended consultation process, which included hearings and deliberations. The scope would allow for amendments to be made to the strategy, and the regional council had made a submission on how to improve the flow of the document.
- Following the return of the document from the designer, the document would be sent back to each submitter to inform them on the parts that had been addressed.
- A concern was raised about leaving out the coastal community of Te Akau South in the reference to the coastal reserves on page 97, which could be added. Additionally, there was a desire to ensure the language used throughout the document was smooth and easily understood.



**Resolved: (Her Worship the Mayor, Mrs JA Church/Cr Turner)**

**THAT the Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee:**

- a. notes that the deliberations panel had considered and responded to the submissions received on the draft Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy as per Attachment 4B to this agenda; and
- b. approves the amendments to the draft Taiao (Nature) in the Waikato Strategy as recommended by the hearings and deliberations panel (Attachment 2), including allowance for spelling and grammatical adjustments during the design phase.

**CARRIED**

**S&W2305/05**

The Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee closed the meeting with a Karakia.

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 11.38am.

Minutes approved and confirmed this                      day of                      2023.

Cr L Thomson  
**CHAIRPERSON**