



## Summary of Waikato Mayoral Forum meeting on 12 February 2018

### WAIKATO MEANS BUSINESS

Fourteen Waikato Means Business projects underway, chair Dallas Fisher told the Waikato Mayoral Forum. For example, the South Waikato Project which has just closed for tenders and will be cost around \$120,000; and the Kopu infrastructure study, in partnership with Thames-Coromandel District Council and the Ministry for Primary Industries, which will hopefully lead to a much more focused approach in the marine area.

He said there was a need to ignite the business world to secure multi-year sponsorship funding for the new Waikato Regional Economic Development Agency (REDA). To this end, already about one third of the sponsorship money required had been secured from two businesses. He said along with resources pledged by regional and local government, the REDA would be well resourced when it opens in mid-2018. He said they were encouraged to see quite significant goodwill in the marketplace.

On 6 March Waikato Means Business will be meeting with central government to see what might be available for the region from the Government's provincial development fund, and what criteria there are for accessing those funds. He said it was essential to be talking with one voice and, as part of this, work was already underway with the Waikato Plan to identify the top 5 economic development projects for the region to take to the Government.

Details for the establishment of the Waikato REDA, to replace Waikato Means Business, were also presented. The Mayoral Forum supported the appointment of Blair Bowcott (HCC) and Rob Williams (TCDC) as local government members of the board to oversee the set up of the Waikato REDA. Three mayors – John Tregidga (Hauraki), Brian Hanna (Waitomo) and Jim Mylchreest (Waipa) – were selected to approve the remaining five members of the establishment board.

It was agreed during the meeting that REDA would report to either the Waikato Mayoral Forum or the Waikato Plan given the significant public interest in regional economic development.

### REGIONAL THEATRE

Waikato Regional Council CE Vaughan Payne said the Mayoral Forum had been working for some time on the development of a community facilities funding framework.

Late last year the regional council was approached by Momentum Waikato seeking \$5 million from regional ratepayers for the regional theatre being proposed to replace the Founders Theatre in Hamilton. It also requested \$300,000 per annum for an asset maintenance reserve fund.

When assessed against the draft framework it was concluded the theatre could be considered a regional facility with regional benefits, he said. During regional council budget talks it was decided to seek public feedback during the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan consultation on a preferred option for \$4.5 million to come from the Waipa, Waikato and Matamata-Piako districts, with the remainder from regional ratepayers (with the exception of Hamilton city which is fronting up with \$25 million).

The framework will also be consulted on.

At the Mayoral Forum there was general support for regional facilities. But there was wide-ranging discussion on the funding proposed by the regional council, including whether the proposed funding model was equitable and affordable. However, it was noted by the Mayoral Forum that it was to be consulted on and there would be an opportunity to provide feedback to the regional council on it.

The regional council was also asked to consider reporting to the Mayoral Forum on a proposal to levy a region-wide targeted rate to build up a regional facilities fund.

## **COLLABORATION WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT**

The Waikato Plan Leadership Group will meet in two weeks to discuss the priorities for the region. The region's chief executives gave some guidance on what these priorities should be: infrastructure (resilience and affordability), transport, housing, iwi engagement/economy, and tourism. Margaret Devlin spoke about the benefits of using the Waikato Plan as a process to advocate and lobby the government with one voice, and how this has been welcomed by iwi.

## **REGIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES FUND**

The Mayoral Forum heard that Waikato Regional Council is seeking feedback on a possible change to the regional emergency services fund, first created two years ago. The changes relate to the inclusion of LandSAR and an increase in funding for additional surf life saving services at Hot Water Beach. During discussion, it was noted that such funding should not be a core function of local government. The cost should instead be borne by central government.

## **REGIONAL HERITAGE FORUM**

The Waikato Regional Heritage Forum was set up to share best practice around heritage management and it met for the first time last November. The forum's membership includes staff from the region's territorial authorities, iwi, and other interest groups. The mayoral Forum heard that it involves information sharing for the benefit of all members. Most importantly, it provides a place for people to discuss what is and isn't working in terms of heritage management, and to agree collectively on the best way forward.

## **NPS ON FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT SWIMMABILITY TARGETS**

Swimmability targets are one of the key amendments made by the Government to the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Freshwater Management last year. There is an overarching goal that 90 per cent of the country's large rivers and lakes should be "swimmable" by 2040.

Swimmability is assessed only on *E.coli* for rivers and cyanobacteria for lakes. Waikato Regional Council CE Vaughan Payne told the Mayoral Forum this is a very narrow focus and it would be recommending the Government that it should be extended to include multiple contaminants not just one.

He said regional councils have been working with the Ministry for the Environment to model how far existing commitments (e.g. wastewater upgrades, fencing) get the country to the national targets and to publish draft regional targets by 31 March as required by the NPS.

Mr Payne told the Mayoral Forum the regional council believed more time than the December deadline was needed to determine final targets in relation to any aspect of water quality to achieve the swimmability goals. He said it was a substantial process to establish targets with communities and iwi, and pointed to Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora: Proposed Plan Change 1 as an example.