



WAIKATO MAYORAL FORUM

Summary of key matters from 20 August 2018 Waikato Mayoral Forum proceedings:

WAIKATO REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY – PROVINCIAL GROWTH FUND

The Waikato Mayoral Forum discussed the Government's Provincial Growth Fund, which has \$3 billion allocated over three years to enhance economic development opportunities in regional New Zealand.

The Waikato Regional Economic Development Agency (REDA) is holding a summit at the end of August to find quality proposals to put forward for funding, and which will enhance economic development opportunities and create sustainable jobs.

Harvey Brookes, of REDA, said a territorial authority partnership agreement to unlock Waikato funding was near to completion.

The forum also heard from two officials from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment: Kathy Mansell, who is advocating the Waikato to the Government as our senior regional official, and Neasa Carroll, who has just left her role as Waikato regional lead for of the Provincial Development Unit which oversees the fund.

Kathy told the forum she was impressed by the passion in the Waikato and "what you want to do with growth".

She said collaboration was hard, but it seemed to be alive and well in the Waikato, especially in areas like water.

Labour MP Jamie Strange addressed the forum, saying if we told our story as a region then we would get "good bang for buck".

He said he saw his job as being a cheerleader for the region, and he had set himself goals to get as many ministers to the Waikato as he could.

"It's all about team Waikato, and we have a good story to play."

WAIKATO PLAN PROJECT REFRESH – UPDATE

The Mayoral Forum received an update on recommendations by independent consultant Peter Winder for a refreshed Waikato Plan.

Mr Winder has been engaged to help and support the project on specific implementation actions.

It was accepted that the Waikato Plan Leadership Group become a standing committee of Waikato Regional Council, with representatives of the business community, local government and others being invited to join.

The forum also provided feedback on Mr Winder's draft terms of reference for the committee.

It was agreed that a committee was the right way to go.

However, members of the forum stressed that the role of the committee was to make recommendations to the regional council, and that the regional council should have confidence in the group and their role.

NATIONAL WATERSCAPE – UPDATE

Waikato Regional Councillor Science and Strategy director Tracey May presented an update on National Waterscape.

The last update given to the Mayoral Forum was about one year ago, heading into the national elections.

Ms May said water was still top of mind for the Government.

She said Minister for the Environment David Parker was very clear about his priorities, and the Government wanted to see demonstrable change quite quickly.

She said there would be a lot of imposed legislation in March next year. A National Environment Standard for Ecological Flows was a “very clear directive from central government” and there would not be much room to step out of bounds.

“Developing and implementing these frameworks don’t come cheaply.”

Understanding sediment and identifying at-risk catchments was also a government priority. Ms May said the Waikato was likely to have a number of at-risk catchments, and the regional council would hold a workshop to identify them.

An Office of the Auditor General performance audit report on how four regional councils, including Waikato, manage the effects of land use on fresh water quality is expected to be released in November.

THREE WATERS REVIEW – UPDATE

Waitomo District Council Mayor Brian Hanna gave an update on the Government’s Three Waters Review, which was discussed at length at the Waikato Mayoral Forum.

Mr Hanna and chief executives Vaughan Payne (Waikato) and Don McLeod (Matamata-Piako), who also spoke, sit on the reference group for the review.

The review was a reaction to the Havelock North Drinking Water Inquiry and recommendations but had become bigger than that, the forum heard.

The Government is looking at UK models of regulating drinking water standards and having dedicated water providers.

It is expected that it will be late 2019 before regulation is established in New Zealand, with other decisions to follow.

It was heard that there was evidence that councils were spending less than they said they would on capital works for water treatment.

It was also noted that drinking water regulations hadn’t been stringent, and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) believed there was a low level of compliance nationwide.

However, it was said that compliance was based on an imperfect monitoring system, and the national system was poorly designed.

“New Zealand drinking water standards were primarily risk based so fraught with opportunity to fail.” And non-compliance could simply be around the level of reporting.

“It’s hard for us as a reference group to know if there is a national problem or if there are hotspots.”

The reference group was having good engagement with the Department of Internal Affairs, and had asked the DIA to come back with stronger evidence to form the base of its review.

“We want evidence rather than rushing it. It’s not there at the moment.

“Different councils have different challenges.”

The reference group was trying to encourage flexibility for communities to make their own decision, “not one size fits all”.

“We want to be part of the solution, but not a rushed solution ... we want to understand the problem then find a solution.”

The solutions for Havelock North may not necessarily apply country wide.

The Mayoral Forum was in agreeance that regulatory action was required.

WATERS COLLABORATION PROPOSAL

The Waikato Mayoral Forum supported to continue with a survey/stocktake of current water activities across participating councils to see if collaboration in the waters local government area was a good idea.

Six to seven councils have expressed an interest in understanding the possible benefits of collaboration in all water activities (potable water, waste water and storm water), and contributing \$10,000 each into a Waikato Mayoral Forum (Waters) fund.

It was agreed that a governance reference group to work with Matamata-Piako District Council chief executive Don McLeod on developing a business case for the establishment of a Water Asset Technical Accord would be the same team of mayors established for RATA (Road Asset Technical Accord).

Mr McLeod said asset management was asset management, whether it was a road or waters, and it made sense to do it collaboratively.

It was urged that the four or so councils not actively involved in the project take part as observers to show the Government that Waikato was looking at water activities as one region.

Mayor Allan Sanson said Waikato District Council was not playing part because it had already committed to another venture, but he urged the forum to show collectiveness “or we may miss the bus”.

Collaboration was seen as one of the lowest cost solutions to getting information, especially with increased compliance costs.

WAIKATO REGIONAL CYCLE TRAILS NETWORK PROGRAMME BUSINESS CASE

The Waikato Region Cycle Trails Network (WRCTN) programme business case was presented at the Waikato Mayoral Forum by regional council transport and infrastructure senior policy advisor Rachel Cook and Waikato Means Business project manager Harvey Brookes.

Ms Cook said the purpose of presenting the business case ahead of the Waikato Regional Economic Development Agency (REDA) economic development summit at the end of August was to give an understanding of the economic benefits of cycle trails for the region.

The Waikato supports and services four Great Rides: Hauraki Rail Trail, Timber Trail, Waikato River Trail and Great Lakes Trail. Together with Te Awa River Ride, they are the focus of the PBC.

The PBC considers all aspects of the cycle trail network, including physical assets, transport providers and connections, planting and ecological restoration, hospitality providers, bike hire, sales and servicing, local community and businesses, events marketing and package and tour operators.

Under a preferred programme for the network, the region would get more visitors staying longer and spending more, and 160 new jobs would be created across the region by 2029. Other benefits include improved health and wellbeing.

Mr Brookes, who helped set up REDA, said the business case stacked up and he wanted to get it in front of the authority as a regional priority.

HAMILTON TO AUCKLAND CORRIDOR – UPDATE

It was hoped that draft corridor plan would go to Transport Minister Phil Twyford in early October, Hamilton City Council special projects director Blair Bowcott told the Mayoral Forum.

This week (beginning 27 August, 2018), staff would spend three days in “inquiry by design session, thrashing out elements of the plan”.

Mr Bowcott said iwi had come to the table with huge number of ideas, and had a lot of land.

“It’s gathering momentum; it’s exciting. It’s going to be something local government can see benefit for.”

Waikato District Council Mayor Allan Sanson voiced concerns about the plan because his council, which is situated in the Hamilton to Auckland corridor, was currently at “maximum stretch” with development and it was hard to keep up. “We’re looking at a number of private plan changes, we can’t move fast enough, we can’t zone fast enough.”

Mr Sanson said he was worried the plan would cause “oversaturation”, and his district was already having issues demand for with water.

Mr Bowcott said the plan was not about creating growth but “how we respond to it with more agility”.

FAREWELL – CRAIG HOBBS, CE, SOUTH WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

South Waikato District Council Mayor Jenny Shattock publically thanked and farewellled South Waikato chief executive Craig Hobbs, who is starting a new job with Auckland Council.

Ms Shattock said Mr Hobbs had made a significant contribution to South Waikato District Council, and raised its profile, in the five years he had been there.

She said his appointment had been a bold move because he had come into the role from outside local government.

“He helped us be the best community we can be and also contributed to the Waikato.”

Mr Hobbs has been involved in LASS (Waikato Local Authority Shared Services), Balloons Over Waikato for seven years and a judge for the Waikato Regional Sports Awards for eight years.

“As mayor I want to thank you, Craig, for your positive outlook vision, drive and commitment.”

Mr Hobbs said he had had a fantastic five and a half years in his role and he felt a bit emotional about leaving.

“They took a punt on me, and I take my hat off to mayors and councillors. No amount of due diligence can prepare you for working in local government.

“The businesses we run are hugely complex and challenging and don’t think the average person on the street appreciates that. I’ve learnt a hell of a lot.”

HEALTHY RIVERS

Waikato Regional Council Science and Strategy director Tracey May gave a quick update on Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Proposed Plan Change 1.

Ms May said further submissions on the 1084 submissions received had been called for, and the submission period had been extended to 20 days – the Resource Management Act requires 10 days for further submissions.

She said the summary of the submissions were on the council’s website, and “your staff will be getting their heads around it for lodging further submissions”.

It is hoped to that the hearing for further submissions would be held in mid to late February.