

Report of a meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee, held in the Council Chambers, 29 Bowler Avenue, Gore, on Tuesday 5 March 2019 at 6.19pm.

Present His Worship the Mayor (Mr Tracy Hicks, JP), Cr Bolger (Chairman), Crs Beale, Davis, Dickson, Gardyne, D Grant, P Grant, Highsted, Phillips, Reid and Sharp.

In Attendance The Chief Executive (Mr Stephen Parry), Chief Financial Officer (Mr Luke Blackbeard), General Manager Regulatory and Planning (Dr Ian Davidson-Watts), General Manager Infrastructure (Mr Ramesh Sharma), Parks and Recreation Manager (Mr Ian Soper), Transport Manager (Mr Peter Standring), Project Manager Infrastructure (MR Hashem Ramezan-zadeh), Communications/Marketin Manager (Sonia Gerken) and two members of the public in the gallery.

1. UPDATE ON SALE OF CIVIC FINANCIAL SERVICES BUILDING (SC2179)

A report from the Chief Financial Officer had been received and a letter from Civic Financial Services circulated.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr P Grant, seconded by Cr D Grant, THAT the report be received.

2. CUSTOMER REQUESTS STATISTICS REPORT

The Council perused a report from the Chief Financial Officer detailing statistics relating to the number of and nature of customer requests received over the last 12 months.

The Chairman noted the high number of enquiries and requests processed and commented the Council was a busy organisation.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Dickson, seconded by Cr Beale, THAT the report be received.

3. RATE ARREARS REPORT (SC2177)

A report from the Chief Financial Officer had been received.

The Chairman asked for clarification of ready for debt collection – no mortgage.

The Officer said it most likely covered people who had entered into a payment arrangement which had not continued, and the ratepayer did not have a mortgage, so debt collection was involved.

The Chairman said he had the impression the Council was willing to work with people and their circumstances and there were payment options available.

The Officer said a proactive approach was taken and ratepayers were encouraged to contact the rating department and work through any issues.

In response to a comment from Cr Beale about abandoned land, the Officer informed the Council that often owners cannot be contacted which slows the sale process.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Highsted, seconded by Cr Reid, THAT the report be received.

4. MAYORAL OFFICE – UPDATE REPORT

The Council perused a report from the Economic Development Coordinator and Social Capacity and Health Coordinator, Mayoral Office.

The Chairman welcomed the Economic Development Coordinator.

The Coordinator commented that the Provincial Growth Fund is the focus of Ready for Growth and until an official outcome is received specific questions were being addressed. Hokonui Highway was under the same situation and awaiting feedback from Ministers regarding the outcome.

The Chairman noted the Coordinators were overwhelmed, particularly with PGF applications and a dedicated team was required.

Cr Beale asked if Hokonui Highway considered helping young people driver training in order to achieve a driver's licence.

His Worship replied that there was a number of initiatives Hokounui Highway was working on with drivers licences at the top and there were several partners involved. It was hoped some serious direction on that project would be forthcoming in the next 10 days.

Cr Dickson said REAP were offering assistance in this area.

His Worship endorsed the Chairman's comments on the workload and efforts of the Coordinators.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Reid, seconded by Cr Dickson, THAT the report be received.

5. SOUTHLAND WARM HOMES TRUST – ANNUAL REPORT (SC1658)

A report from the Chief Executive had been received together with a copy of the Southland Warm Homes annual report.

Cr Highsted said a new contract through EECA had been secured and the funding now available from EECA was up to 92% subsidy made up of 25% from local funds and 67% from EECA. Funds would diminish over time as the funds were uploaded. He said the old scheme was landlord based but it did not gain momentum.

Cr Dickson added landlords were expected to have better insulation and where someone in the home had a Community Services card there would be more uptake.

Cr Highsted said there was a drive at landlords but the offer had not been taken up. It was now a homeowner based subsidy.

The Chairman asked for clarification that a Community Services card was necessary.

Cr Highsted confirmed it was.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of His Worship, seconded by Cr Dickson, THAT the report be received.

His Worship asked for the meeting to be adjourned while the Youth Council speed dating session was undertaken.

The meeting adjourned 6.38pm and resumed at 7.15pm.

The Communications/Marketing Manager left the meeting 6.38pm.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR JANUARY 2019

A report from the Accountant had been received together with a financial report for January 2019.

The Chairman noted that borrowing was less than budgeted and asked if it was for the year or was it the current position.

The Officer replied it was the current position but by year end it would be a little behind due to timing of capital works.

The Chief Executive returned to the meeting at 7.16pm.

Cr Highsted asked the value of cash on deposit.

The Officer replied approximately \$1 million.

In response to Cr Highsted, the Officer said it would be utilised by the end of the year and would be used before any further borrowing.

Cr Dickson referred to the regulatory variance in WOF fees and asked if the hiring of a new consultant would affect this.

The Officer said it would not as the report referred to two departments; regulatory and planning. WOF fees related to the Building Department and there had been a delay in getting those out and bringing revenue in.

The General Manager Regulatory added there would be a full charge this year and it would help recoup some losses from last year. This was due to the introduction of new fees and, rather than charging immediately, education was the approach taken.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Officer confirmed the position for the Ajax pump station was where it needed to be and was tracking well.

The Chairman referred to the loss on the LED lighting and asked for confirmation that what had been recovered has not reached depreciated loss so would be a book loss rather than a cash loss.

The Officer confirmed that was correct and depreciation was based on the full value and not the subsidised value.

Cr Gardyne referred to Pyramid Bridge and asked if the Council would receive a 73% subsidy rather than 55% subsidy.

This was confirmed by the Chief Financial Officer.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of D Grant, seconded by N Phillips, THAT the report be received.

The meeting concluded at 7.29pm.