

THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 13 MARCH 2012, AT THE OFFICES OF THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL, 388 MAIN SOUTH ROAD, GREYMOUTH, COMMENCING AT 11.15 A.M.

PRESENT:

R. Scarlett (Chairman), B. Chinn, A. Robb, T. Archer, D. Davidson, A. Birchfield, I Cummings

IN ATTENDANCE:

C. Ingle (Chief Executive Officer), R. Mallinson (Corporate Services Manager), C. Dall (Consents & Compliance Manager), M. Meehan (Planning & Environmental Manager), T. Jellyman (Minutes Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies

2. PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public forum.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Moved (Archer / Birchfield) *that the minutes of the Council Meeting dated 7 February 2012, be confirmed as correct.*

Carried

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

REPORTS:

4.1 ENGINEERING OPERATIONS REPORT

M. Meehan spoke to this report advising that work has been completed in the Taramakau rating district and Wanganui rating district. M. Meehan reported that the upgrade of the Last Resort stopbank has started with Ferguson Brothers Ltd winning this contract.

M. Meehan reported that a meeting would be held this morning with the ratepayers in the Taramakau rating district to discuss a resource consent application. He advised that these ratepayers are considered an affected party.

M. Meehan reported that there has been the usual number of requests for rock in the Kiwi, Blackball and Whataroa quarries.

Moved (Birchfield / Davidson) *that this report be received.*

Carried

4.1 CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

R. Mallinson spoke to this report advising that there is an operating surplus of \$467,000 for the seven month period. R. Mallinson reported that there are positive budget variances amounting to \$110,000 in the general rate funded activities. He reported that the operating surplus improved by \$96,000 during January, which was mainly attributable to the \$100,000 improvement in the portfolio results. Cr Scarlett stated that the budget and actual are very close and this shows good budgeting. Cr Archer drew

attention to the expenditure for river, drainage and coastal protection, he asked if the difference between the year to date figures and actual figures are just a timing matter as there is a \$300,000 variation. R. Mallinson stated that this is catch up work that has been done throughout the financial year. R. Mallinson advised that in addition to rates income, council has received local contributions for this work as well. C. Ingle advised that the works in the Whataroa rating district has had an impact on these figures.

Moved (Cummings / Archer) *that this report be received.*

Carried

4.2.1 PROPOSED FINANCIAL STRATEGY PURSUANT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT ACT 2010

R. Mallinson spoke to this report advising that the Local Government Amendment Act requires council to adopt this strategy. R. Mallinson advised that this document is included in the LTP, which is being audited this week by Audit NZ. R. Mallinson advised that the theme underlying this strategy is one of financial prudence and minimizing costs to ratepayers. Cr Scarlett stated that you couldn't argue with this, as it is good for the ratepayer.

Moved (Archer / Robb) *that Council approve the Draft Financial Strategy for inclusion in the LTP.*

Carried

C. Ingle advised that by adopting this strategy council is actually constraining itself into the future, and future councils. He advised that where this strategy could bite is if things changed dramatically, if VCS doesn't work out as well as it has been or if the investment fund doesn't perform as well as usual or both the proposed caps may have to be breached. He advised that this would then require a change to the LTP and council would need to go through two processes, which would mean that a council decision would have to be made to exceed this and to publicly notify that council is going to go through a plan change to change the caps in the LTP. Cr Archer advised that this process is already available to council in Standing Orders, to reverse a decision. C. Ingle advised that he is not expecting this to happen but it there is a risk that it may happen. Cr Robb stated that this would be a good process to go through, as people are made aware of change. Cr Birchfield asked what would happen if a rating district needed to rate higher what would happen. R. Mallinson drew attention to the report where it states that "*river, drainage & coastal protection scheme rates will not exceed the sustainable level of annual maintenance expenditure identified in the relevant asset management plan + 33%. (This is to enable sufficient flexibility to react to requests by these protection scheme communities for protection works. If the community supports a level of scheme rates that exceed these limits, then the community wish will prevail)*". R. Mallinson clarified that council does not want community wishes constrained in any way by the cap. R. Mallinson explained that there is a considerable amount of wiggle room if a cap of 25% was to be adopted for targeted rates. Cr Birchfield stated that some of the rating district rates are too low and one day they will need to catch up. Cr Robb stated that one of the biggest targeted rates is the Tb rate. C. Ingle advised that there is still scope to make further amendments.

6.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

C. Ingle spoke to his report and spoke of the various meetings he attended during the reported period. He advised that he met with the team from the office of the Auditor General who are reviewing the delivery of the biodiversity services that the Department of Conservation carries out. C. Ingle advised that discussions took place on how the two organisations have interrelated over the last few years. C. Ingle advised that he suggested that there must be a better way of doing things rather than meeting across the courtroom table, although, that there are some areas where the two organisations have worked well together.

C. Ingle reported that the Audit NZ team is on site at the moment to review the Draft LTP. He advised once this review is complete the Draft Plan will come back to Council at the April meeting for release for public submissions.

C. Ingle reported that the review of the Enforcement Policy is following on from council adopting the new Alternative Justice Policy that Cr Robb promoted. C. Ingle reported that he has now built this into the new enforcement policy, which is attached to his report. He stated that he has now simplified the flowcharts to ensure that they are easier to follow. C. Ingle advised that the formal warning option has been included in the policy, and the prosecution procedures refers to the Alternative Justice Policy now as well. Cr Cummings stated that this is a very good idea and he feels that people should be given a copy of

the Enforcement Policy when they are given their resource consent so that they know exactly where they stand. Cr Cummings stated that he has been a miner for over 30 years and this document would have been very helpful over the years.

Cr Archer stated that he is still not quite certain who makes the decision in terms of the Alternative Justice Policy. Cr Archer stated that he feels it would be helpful if those who make the decision were named in the document. C. Ingle advised that it would be himself and C. Dall or himself and M. Meehan who make the decisions. It was agreed that this would be included in the document. C. Ingle stated that the only judgement call that needs to be made is whether or not the offender meets the eligibility criteria.

Moved (Archer / Davidson)

1. *That this report be received.*
2. *That the attached Enforcement Policy is approved.*

Carried

7.0 CHAIRMANS REPORT (VERBAL)

The Chairman reported that he attended the Regional Sector Group meeting in Christchurch. He stated this was a very interesting meeting, which started off with a tour of the CBD. He stated that this was a pretty sobering look. Cr Scarlett stated that parts of the CBD are unrecognisable with 80% of the floor area having been lost. He advised that rebuilding is unlikely to get underway for about 15 months, as it will take 15 months to get some of the buildings down. Cr Scarlett stated that one of the matters discussed at this meeting is that the government is looking at rationalisation in councils and Ministers do like the unitary council approach. Cr Scarlett stated that this is not for everyone but regions like Southland and Taranaki may be interested. Cr Scarlett stated that the government is to look at this again but the view is that they won't force it but they will be encouraging councils to amalgamate and to look at the benefits in doing this. Cr Scarlett stated that Local Government is engaging with this government and they are pleased with the new Minister as he makes decisions.

Cr Scarlett reported that he attended the Zone 5 meeting. He advised that there is going to be a 10% increase in LGNZ fees over 2 – 3 years. He advised that this is because Auckland has said they are not paying as because of the amalgamation it has made the fees very high and they have had their fees reduced by \$300,000 - \$400,000, which now leaves a shortfall. Cr Scarlett stated that for this council our payment to LGNZ would increase by about \$2,500 over three years.

Cr Scarlett reported that he dealt with general queries from constituents during the reporting period.

C. Ingle reported that Mayor Kokshoorn has sent a letter relating to unitary councils. Cr Scarlett stated that there has been two goes at this in the past and it has not been successful. Cr Scarlett stated that unitary means one council and not three and he feels that Buller would not want to join Grey and others may not be keen either. Cr Robb stated that the Mayor had stated in the media that the regional council functions could be split between the three councils so one council do air quality, one might do something else. Cr Robb stated he does not see how this would work, as the people of Greymouth would have no voting rights or submission process over this. He stated this is flawed. C. Ingle advised that this would be discussed more at the next Mayors and Chairs forum. Cr Scarlett stated that he is all for cost effectiveness and efficiency and it is up to the ratepayers to say this is what we want. Cr Robb stated that prior this being put to the people there needs to be some in depth analysis of the costs and the benefits to the ratepayers otherwise it is just political grandstanding. Cr Davidson stated that it needs to be workable, he feels it would be a mess if each council was doing a little bit of the regional councils function. Cr Robb asked Cr Scarlett if he felt that there was a drive to take the regional functions from councils. Cr Scarlett stated that the councils with high debt and increased costs will be looked at. Cr Scarlett stated that we can stand tall as a regional council as we have had no rate increases and our debt is incredibly low. He stated that when this council is compared to others it is run very efficiently. Cr Scarlett stated we are a small council, serving 31,000 people, we are compliant with the RMA and this council is run efficiently. Cr Robb stated that he is concerned that this council could lose its decision making autonomy around the regional functions. Cr Scarlett stated that this has never been mentioned. Cr Birchfield stated he would be very concerned if the consenting function for this council was to be given to Grey District Council, as they are one of the slower council's in the country for processing consents and this council is one of the top ones in the country. Cr Chinn commented that Westland is also slow. Cr Birchfield stated that district councils are not efficient with regard to consent processing.

Moved (Scarlett / Robb) *that this report be received.*

Carried

GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Chinn asked if there has been a response back from the Minister for the Environment regarding the media article in the Greymouth Evening Star cautioning this council. Cr Scarlett responded that a letter from us has been written and a reply received stating that the Minister will respond in due course. Cr Scarlett stated that the response will be circulated to councilors as soon as it has been received.

The meeting closed at 11.48 a.m.

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Chairman

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Date