

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Gore District Council, held virtually by Zoom, on Tuesday 26 May 2020, at 4.09pm

Present His Worship the Mayor, Mr Tracy Hicks JP, Crs Bolger, Dickson, D Grant JP, N Grant, Highsted, MacDonell (from 4.21pm) McPhail, Phillips and Reid.

In attendance The Chief Executive (Mr Stephen Parry), General Manager Infrastructure (Mr Ramesh Sharma), Roading Asset Manager (Mr Peter Standring), Planning Consultant (Mr Keith Hovell), HR/Administration Manager (Susan Jones) and Corporate Support Officer (Mrs Karla Brotherston).

Apology Cr MacDonell apologised for lateness.

1. SOLID WASTE BYLAW (SC0107)

A report had been received from the Planning Consultant advising that the Solid Waste Bylaw 2008 had been due for review on 1 July 2018. Unless the bylaw was reviewed in some form by 1 July 2020, under section 160A of the Local Government Act 2002 it would be automatically revoked.

Approval was sought from the Council to reconfirm the current bylaw, subject to several minor changes and undertake immediate public consultation so that the reviewed bylaw could be confirmed by the 1 July deadline. The approach was a temporary measure to facilitate a more thorough review of the bylaw when resources were once again available. The Council had previously endorsed being party to a regional bylaw covering all of Southland that would be prepared by the Waste Advisory Group.

RESOLVED on the motion of Cr Bolger, seconded by Cr D Grant, **THAT** pursuant to section 155(1) of the Local Government Act 2002, the Council resolve that a bylaw is the most appropriate way of addressing the perceived and real problems referred to in this report,

THAT the Council publicly notify the draft bylaw circulated, outlining the changes proposed from that of 2008 and inviting public submissions,

AND THAT the Council note that submissions will close on 19 June in order that the bylaw can be adopted on or before 30 June 2020.

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The Planning Consultant departed the meeting at 4.15pm

2. 2020/2021 COUNCIL BUDGET (SC2820)

A memo had been received from the Chief Executive advising that preparation of the Council budget for the 2020-2021 had been a challenging exercise. There had been two events that contributed to the challenges faced by the Council with the February flooding emergency and then the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The Council's Long Term Plan established in 2018 forecast a district-wide rate increase in 2020-2021 of 4.53%. Prior to the imposition of alert Level 4 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic on 25 March, the Council had been grappling with a proposed rate increase of 6.7%. Extensive fine-tuning of the budget by senior staff had been undertaken to unearth savings that could be made without impacting on levels of service to the community. That had resulted in a proposed rate increase reducing from 6.7% to 2.64%. However, late advice had been received by email from the Matura Licensing Trust that it was unable to meet its commitment to contribute 25% of the operating cost (or the normal ratepayer requirement) of the MLT Events Centre. A copy of the email received had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chief Executive noted that further reductions could be achieved but they would be at the expense of service levels or organisational capacity. Delaying the appointment of a General Manager Regulatory and Community Services could further reduce the rates requirement.

A high level summary detailing all the changes to the Council budget had been circulated with the agenda.

His Worship felt the proposal was a responsible place for the Council to be at. It would enable the Council to be capable of making changes and encouraging innovation in the community. There could be further cuts, however, if the Council went through with those there could be a loss of capability within the Council and the community as a consequence.

Cr Highsted said it would have been nice to have delivered a zero percent rates increase to the community, but the Council was in a position to have employment for those in the community. He thought the Council needed to have a modest increase this year. He asked about the base wage increase and whether that was comparing what had been in the LTP compared to current reality. The Chief Executive said it was showing what the Council was currently incurring, not a desired increase. Cr Highsted questioned the Corporate HR Officer and part-time animal control positions but would prefer to leave them in. In terms of the Management Accountant, Tussock Country Coordinator and Community Strategy Manager he thought they would be required for the community.

Cr Gardyne said most corporates were asking staff to take salary reductions for six months. The Council needed to be aware of that and it was happening in the community. Next year's budget may need to have more trimming. He questioned the part-time animal control position and whether the revenue to be received equated to what was expected and whether the position should be on hold.

In response to His Worship, the Chief Executive said it was a desirable position and arose from the dog action plan. It was a hard to fill position and was proposed to be funded by a revised dog registration fee. However, it was not essential to retain it in this year's budget. He did not think it would undermine the Council's ability to deliver its animal control service. A key aim of the position was education.

Cr Reid thanked the staff for the work done to reduce the rates increase. At the end of the day, the Council had services to provide and people to employ so better a smaller increase this year than a large one next year. She referred to the amount that would not be forthcoming from the MLT and whether it was a quarterly or annual figure. The Chief Executive said it was quarterly but the \$17,500 noted had been unusually high due to some maintenance requirements. The Council budgeted \$33,000 annually. Cr Reid felt the Tussock Country Coordinator and Community Strategy Manager position were required to support initiatives in the community.

Cr Bolger said the Council had a history of conservative financial management. He was very comfortable with a 2.84% increase while retaining services and improving infrastructure.

Cr Davis was unable to attend the last annual plan workshop, but questioned the events coordinator who, as a result of Covid-19, would not have many events to organise and whether it was possible that person could do some of the Tussock Country role. His Worship said the coordinator was currently recovering from an operation. In terms of the Tussock Country position, the Coordinator could be utilised for that. However, before her operation she had been involved in a business recovery role and it was expected she would continue to be involved with that in the next few months.

Cr Davis asked what the Tussock Country role involved. Cr Reid said the biggest improvement was taking the festival from a capable base of volunteers to a professional event involving marketing, social media and other aspects. His Worship added when he started meeting with the group he did not think there was too much to change, however, the risk of not doing it well was huge and in his mind, the right person at the right time was required to coordinate the festival. The person involved with the group had engendered a lot of bookings and interest in the festival and a number of accommodation providers were already booked out. The role was for six months and funded accordingly.

Cr Davis referred to the Community Strategy Manager and asked what role they would play. The Chief Executive said the Council had a Community Strategy Committee that needed an advisor and there was no resource currently in that area. The attention

around business recovery post Covid-19 would be championed by a Community Strategy Manager. The role would also work with some of the social issues that may emerge and had been evident prior to Covid-19 such as community resilience and drugs in the community, along with economic development. Cr McPhail said the landscape had changed. He acknowledged the work done by the staff to get the increase to 2.84%. With discussions he had with members of the business community, there was a good deal of fear of the unknown and he saw the Community Strategy Manager position as key and important to look at opportunities for businesses. Trying to retain the capability and capacity in the town was also crucial. Once they were gone they tended not to return. There would be community projects that would be shelved if there was no capability in the Council. With regard to Tussock Country, there were unknowns as to what may happen in the future. Gore maybe onto something that could be bigger than first thought. Professional management and knowledge would be required to achieve that. Insofar as the commentary from the MLT was concerned, he hoped that its financial situation would improve in the next few months and as a result, a return in its funding stream to support the Event Centre and other community events. His Worship said the Council had had a long relationship with the Trust and he hope that could continue in the future.

Cr Phillips hoped the Community Strategy Manager position would deliver value for money. Some conversations he had with members in the community were not positive about it. His Worship acknowledged his concerns, but felt it would pay dividends in the long term. Likewise for Tussock Country, there was real potential for a great event to be delivered. He said there had been a lot of work in reducing the initial rates increase to 2.84%. In his view, it was a responsible and fair budget and hopefully one that would enable the Council to continue with the progress that it had made in recent years. Some of the projects that the Council was undertaking were some of the biggest that had been programmed. He hoped that there would also be Government support for some of the projects.

Cr Dickson said no-one liked rates rises, but central Government required compliance by Councils. She thought a 2.84% was a fiscally responsible result. She asked if the agreement with the MLT to fund a share of the operating loss of the Event Centre was a binding agreement. The Chief Executive recalled it was an email exchange between the Council and the former General Manager of the MLT. The arrangement had been in operation for about nine years.

Cr Davis also thought the 2.84% was fiscally responsible. She hoped that there would be some progress and benefit to the community for the Tussock Country position and Community Strategy Manager role.

Cr D Grant said the retail and business sector in Gore was currently in a very dicey position and there was a projected loss of jobs.

RESOLVED on the motion of Cr McPhail, seconded by Cr Reid, THAT the Council consider the inclusions and adjustments in the 2020/2021 Council budget and approve its content or variants thereof, for inclusion in the Annual Plan,

AND THAT the Council note that the 2020/2021 Annual Plan together with a rates resolution based on the approved Council budget will be presented to the Council for approval by the end of June.

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3. LOCAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (SC0110)

A memo had been received from the Chief Executive advising that section 40 of the Local Government Act 2002 required local authorities to prepare and make publicly available following each triennial general election of members, a Local Governance Statement. The Statement provided information about the processes through which the Council engaged with its residents, outlining how the Council made decisions and provided guidance on how citizens could influence those processes.

A copy of the draft Local Governance Statement had been circulated with the agenda.

Cr Dickson asked if the Council had a statutory obligation to liaise with both Te O Marama and Hokonui Rununga. His Worship advised the Council was working to confirm its Iwi connections.

RESOLVED on the motion of Cr Reid, seconded by Cr Phillips, THAT the updated Local Governance Statement be adopted and made available to the public.

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4. RETHINKING RUBBISH, RECYCLING – WASTE MANAGEMENT AND MINIMISATION (SC0689)

A report had been received from the Chief Executive following the extraordinary Council meeting held on 22 April when the Council approved the implementation of a new kerbside recycling service to commence on 1 July 2020. The new service was necessary due to the impending expiry of the current recycling contract with Southland DisAbility Enterprises Ltd on 30 June.

Since that time, Council staff had been planning the introduction of the revised and limited recycling service. Publication of the Council's intentions had triggered comment and concern on social media in relation to the retention of only two red bin collections each month. The concerns raised via consumers of the service were primarily centred around the greater use of the red bin for refuse, given the fact that only glass would be deposited in the yellow recycling bin. There was concern about a reduced level of service being provided for the same cost, however, that concern failed to recognise that green waste disposal would now be offered free of charge. A summary of commentary received on the Council's website and other social media channels relating to the limitations of only two collections for the red bin had been circulated with the agenda.

His Worship said the issue had been very challenging with the changes proposed given it was quite different to what the community had previously done. The options available were now very limited.

Cr Bolger felt it was clear that the Council had not articulated to the community why the changes were required. He said there had been massive changes to the recycling markets and the current regional provider would no longer be the Council's provider from 30 June. Significant changes were therefore required. He thought having three red bin and one yellow bin collection was sensible, bearing in mind that disposal of green waste was free. He thought the Council had been remiss in not fully informing the public why the changes were required.

Cr D Grant asked why the Council did not allow different sized bins. Some residents would not utilise the yellow bin but may have a larger amount of rubbish. Cr Davis said if the Council changed the yellow bins to smaller bins, there would be a significant cost to the Council as well as finding somewhere to store the larger bins.

Cr Dickson said manufacturers were costing local authorities a lot of money and she felt central Government needed to step in and address the volume of waste that was being created. His Worship agreed and said there had been a Packaging Accord put in place about 10 years ago however there had been little change as a result. Ultimately, waste minimisation was the answer as opposed to having larger bins provided.

Cr Phillips said a lot of people did not realise how much it cost to recycle goods. The Roading Asset Manager advised it cost \$182,000 per annum to collect two recycling rounds. In addition, there were transport and disposal costs. It equated to \$566 per tonne from kerbside to the end point. Cr Phillips thought the community needed to be educated to minimise waste, especially that which would otherwise end up in the landfill.

Cr Reid understood people were concerned about their red bins overflowing. Also, the community needed to be educated to minimise their own waste. She thought companies needed to consider their packaging and reduce it where possible.

RESOLVED on the motion of Cr Bolger, seconded by Cr Davis, THAT the Council approve implementation of option 2 to commence on 1 July 2020 and note that a focused communication strategy will be pursued with the objective of ensuring that recipients of the kerbside recycling service are aware of the new arrangements that take place from 1 July.

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The meeting concluded at 5.32pm