

Date: 13 August 2024 at 3.30 PM
Venue: Council Chambers, 63 Miranda Street, Stratford

Present

The District Mayor N C Volzke (the Chairman), the Deputy Mayor M Mckay, Councillors: S J Beck, J M S Erwood, A M C Dudley, A K Harris, E E Hall, W J Sandford, C M Tongaawhikau and M J Watt.

In attendance

The Chief Executive – Mr S Hanne, the Acting Director – Assets – Mr S Bowden, the Director – Environmental Services – Mr B Sutherland, the Acting Director – Community Services – Mrs E Bishop, the Committee Secretary – Ms E Coulton, the Communications Manager – Ms G Gibson, the Communications Advisor – Ms S Clarkson, the Sustainability Advisor – Mrs V Dombroski, the HR & Governance Administrator – Mrs C Reynolds, the Community and Economic Development Manager – Ms S Afzal, 3 members of the media (the Taranaki Daily News and the Stratford Press) And 18 members of the public.

1. Welcome

The District Mayor welcomed Elected Members, members of the public, staff and the media to the meeting.

The opening karakia was read.

The District Mayor reiterated the health and safety message and emergency procedures.

2. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor V R Jones and approved leave of absence noted from Councillor G W Boyde.

Recommendation

THAT the apology be received.

TONGAAWHIKAU/HALL
Carried
CL/24/100

3. Announcements

The District Mayor noted that an updated recommendation for item 8 has been tabled. This revision includes minor adjustments to wording and sentence structure.

4. Declarations of Members Interest

Elected members to declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest relating to items on this agenda. There were no conflicts of interest declared.

5. Attendance Schedule

The attendance schedule for Ordinary and Extraordinary Council meetings was attached.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

6.1 Ordinary Meeting of Council – 9 July 2024 D24/333405 Page 10

Recommendation

THAT the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 9 July 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

ERWOOD/HARRIS
Carried
CL/24/101

6.2 Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – 16 July 2024 D24/38200 (Open) D24/34064 (PE) Page 22

Recommendations

1. THAT the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on Tuesday 16 July 2024 be received.

McKAY/BECK
Carried
CL/24/102

2. THAT the recommendations in the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting, including the public excluded section, held on Tuesday 16 July 2024 be adopted.

VOLZKE/HALL
Carried
CL/24/103

6.6 Policy and Services Committee – 23 July 2024 D24/36732 Page 37

Recommendations

1. THAT the unconfirmed minutes of the Policy and Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 23 July 2024 be received.

McKAY/SANDFORD
Carried
CL/24/104

2. THAT the recommendations, excluding item 10 – Draft Sustainability Policy, in the minutes of the Policy and Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 23 July 2024 be adopted.

3. THAT the Sustainability Policy (item 10) be amended to:
THAT the Sustainability Policy be adopted.

McKAY/DUDLEY
Carried
CL/24/105

6.5 **Extraordinary Meeting of Council – 23 July 2024 (Insurance Renewal)**
D24/36806 (Open) D24/38224 (PE) Page 41

Recommendation

THAT the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 23 July 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

ERWOOD/HARRIS
Carried
CL/24/106

7. **District Mayor's Report**
D24/38925 Page 49

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.

VOLZKE/SANDFORD
Carried
CL/24/107

2. THAT Mayor Volzke be appointed as the Stratford District Council presiding delegate for the 2024 LGNZ Annual General Meeting to be held on 21 August 2024 and Deputy Mayor Mckay being the alternate presiding delegate.

VOLZKE/HARRIS
Carried
CL/24/108

The District Mayor noted the following:

- Item 1 in the report offers an update of Jobseeker Support numbers in the Stratford District. He pointed out that this item prompts a question about how our Council would like to contribute to reducing these numbers and what level of involvement is desired. He expressed interest in gathering input from councillors on this matter at a later date.
- The District Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and Councillor Hall are attending the LGNZ Annual General Meeting on the 21st of August. He mentioned that the meeting requires delegates for voting purposes and proposed himself as the primary delegate, with the Deputy Mayor serving as the alternate presiding delegate.

8. Decision Report – Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act
D24/38357 Page 55

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.

HARRIS/DUDLEY
Carried
CL/24/109

2. THAT Council resolves to retain the Māori Ward for the 2025 Elections.

3. THAT Council notes that this decision will require the holding of a binding poll on the question of Māori Wards to be held in conjunction with the 2025 elections with the result of the poll being in place for the 2028 elections.

McKAY/HALL
Carried
CL/24/110

Recommended Reason

There is significant public interest in this matter but due to the timeframes set within the legislation Council is unable to do this justice at this point. Therefore the recommendation is to retain the status quo until appropriate consultation and poll can be undertaken.

The Chief Executive noted the following:

- Before discussing the details of the decision report, it is important to acknowledge those who paved the way for the establishment of a Māori Ward within the Stratford District Council. He expressed a desire to honour past Councillor Peter Dalziel, who, despite undergoing cancer treatment, attended the pivotal meeting on Māori Wards via audiovisual link in his car, to second the motion to adopt a Māori ward. The one-year anniversary of his passing has just been.
- The report presents three options: 1) Retain the Māori Ward for the 2025 elections with a binding poll to be held during the 2028 elections, 2) Disestablish the Māori Ward, or 3) Divert the decision to an Extraordinary Meeting to gather community feedback. It was emphasised that the first option is preferred, as a decision needs to be made by September 6th, which does not allow enough time for comprehensive and fair community input.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- The Deputy Mayor expressed that she is in favour of retaining the Māori Ward. She emphasised that she believes the community is a better place for *everyone* when working alongside Iwi and it is about partnership, not just having a seat at the table. It was noted that the Deputy Mayor is concerned about the central government's actions, regardless of the specific issue, as they are implementing changes that retrospectively affect past decisions. She pointed out that while the current central government advocates for empowering local government to make their own decisions in the best interest of their communities, they are now undermining this principle by overturning a decision already made in 2021. She highlighted that the Māori Ward is the only Ward requiring a binding referendum which creates an inconsistency within the legislation. She expressed that this does not exhibit good decision making.

- Councillor Hall emphasised that the governments bill is an overreach on local governments power and responsibility to make decisions for the best interest of the community. It does not honour Te Tiriti and the Local Government Act and reverses decisions made within local councils. She expressed that she is saddened to see these conversations being had again and that the processes taken by central government surrounding this decision are alarming and frustrating. She emphasised that when the referendum takes place she hopes our community votes yes, otherwise we all lose.
- Councillor Harris reiterated that the mechanism taken by central government is an overreach and feels as if there is a one way street between local government and central government. She emphasised that the central government needs to be reminded about entrusting local government in decision making.
- Councillor Tongaawhikau expressed that the words shared by the Wahine Toa in the room made him feel a sense of humbleness. He emphasised that he has taken on this role out of a deep love and passion for his Whānau, and that it has never been about personal gain or money for him. He expressed that his people are from this land, and he feels a profound connection to the whenua that goes beyond superficial or material concerns. He has fallen in love with his role within council and thanked councillors for their kind words.
- Councillor Dudley noted her support for the retention of the Māori Ward and highlighted that in an ideal world we would not be in this position. It is disappointing to be having this conversation again.
- The District Mayor acknowledged that the speakers that came forward in the public forum did an excellent job. He noted that in 2021, we had the opportunity to establish Māori wards, and the Council agreed, with this decision taking effect in the 2022 elections, however we are now faced with a decision that may impact this based on the recent bill provided by central government. He emphasised that councillors made that decision in good faith and within the framework of the legislation at the time, but now the rules have changed. It is disappointing how the government has handled this matter, demonstrating a lack of respect for our Council's authority to make decisions that impact our community. He expressed that we had the opportunity to make a decision, and the Council should be entitled to retain it. Comments from speakers have highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts such as housing and health developments, as well as the exceptional COVID response from the local iwi. These successes would not have been possible without the addition of a Māori ward, he emphasised that he is in favour of the retention of the Māori Ward.
- Councillor Beck admitted that he was not the biggest fan of the addition of a Māori Ward seat when the decision was first made in 2021, but working with Councillor Tongaawhikau and Iwi on projects and in a governance matter has changed his point of view. He noted that he supports the retention of the Māori Ward.

Councillor Tongaawhikau and 15 Members of public left the meeting at 4.13 pm.

9. Information Report – 2024 Customer Satisfaction Survey

D24/34569 Page 70

Recommendation

THAT the report be received.

VOLZKE/ERWOOD

Carried
CL/24/111

Recommended Reason

This is an information report only. It provides the 2023/24 Customer Satisfaction Survey results.

The Communications Manager noted the following:

- The Library and I-Site had an incredible customer satisfaction report.
- Going forward this will be the last report seeing the Library and the I-Site as two separate services as they will now be seen as one service as per the LTP.
- An additional question was added into the survey this year surrounding council run events.
- This survey was the last survey to be delivered via post and future surveys will be received via email and available online.

Questions/Points of Clarification:

- The District Mayor noted that across the report it seems to indicate that people received access to the survey at different times throughout the year. The Communications Manager clarified that this is intentional as the survey is released in 4 waves, she noted that this gives a wide overview of people opinions throughout the year and helps spread out the communication from council during busy periods.
- It was discussed that the statistics breakdown seemed to only be based on 400 participants, it was questioned whether this was the actual number of people who filled out the survey or if it was the sample number of responses used. The Communications Manager noted that she will follow this up with Key Research.
- The Acting Director - Community Services reiterated the excellent results achieved by the library and noted the positive increase in cemetery satisfaction rates. She attributed this improvement to the diligent efforts of the officers working behind the scenes.
- The Deputy Mayor noted that the report includes comments suggesting the council does not listen to the community's voice. She expressed discomfort with this characterisation, believing that councillors do a good job of considering public input. She inquired whether any steps could be taken from a communications perspective to address and change this narrative. The Communications Manager noted that it comes down to being transparent with the public and sharing the process. She noted that in the past the communications team has been fantastic at reporting on decisions but not so great at taking people on the journey of how council came to that decision, she emphasised that the communications team are working on this and are due to see an improvement shortly due to the new engagement tools implemented. The Chief Executive noted that he is aware of the allegations and noted a multitude of projects that have been implemented or altered due to public consultation, these include the toilets behind the clocktower, the pedestrian crossing change in plan and the pool complex upgrades. He emphasised that interest in councils processes and decisions have changed in the last 5 years becoming increasingly popular.

10. Questions

- The District Mayor noted that he has sent out an email to councillors regarding the LGNZ AGM, he emphasised that each councillor needs to respond with their answers to this so that information can be collated before the meeting next week.

The Meeting Closed at 4.35 pm.

N C Volzke
Chairman

Confirmed this 10th day of September 2024.

N C Volzke
District Mayor