

## Northland Mayoral Forum Minutes

Meeting held in the Kaipara District Council Conference Room,  
1C Molesworth Drive, Mangawhai  
on Monday 26 February 2024, commencing at 10.00am

### Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, WDC Mayor Vincent Cocurullo  
FNDC Mayor Moko Tepania (*Via audio-visual link. Left 10.55 – 11.03am*)  
KDC Mayor Craig Jepson  
NRC Chair Geoff Crawford (*From 10.16am. Left 12.42pm*)  
WDC Chief Executive Simon Weston  
KDC Chief Executive Officer Jason Marris  
NRC Tāhūhū Rangapū - Chief Executive Jonathan Gibbard (*From 10.16am. Left 12.42pm*)  
FNDC Chief Executive Officer Guy Holroyd

### I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

#### Full Meeting

NRC Governance Specialist

#### Part Meeting

Regional Public Service Commissioner for Northland  
Te Taumata Hauora o Te Kahu o Taonui Iwi Māori Partnership Board  
Chief Executive (*Via audio-visual link*)  
Mr Darius Martin-Baker  
NRC Economist (*Via audio-visual link for Item 5.4 only*)

*Secretarial Note: The Chair declared the meeting open at 10.01am and acknowledged it was the first day of the State Highway 1 Brynderwyns closure to undertake restoration work. The detour route through Cove Road was well supported with traffic lights at each of the one way bridges.*

### Ngā whakapahā/Apologies (Item 1.0)

The apologies from the NRC Chair and NRC Chief Executive Officer for delayed arrival were noted.

### Confirmation of Minutes - 13 November 2023 (Item 3.1)

Report from Chris Taylor, NRC Governance Specialist

#### Moved (Cocurullo/Jepson)

That the minutes of the Northland Mayoral Forum held on 13 November 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record..

Carried

## Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 4.1)

### Report from Chris Taylor, NRC Governance Specialist

The action sheet was received.

#### Secretarial Note:

- *The Waste to Energy initiative was steadily progressing with the concept being socialised with Rodney councillors and supported by the Auckland Mayor.*
- *The Briefings for incoming Ministers had been well received and had generated a number of direct responses.*

## Introduction: Regional Public Service Commissioner for Northland (Item 5.1)

The Regional Public Service Commissioner (RPSC) for Northland, Graham MacPherson, was in attendance to introduce himself and provide an overview of his recent appointment in the role of RPSC for Northland (the role previously held by Eru Lyndon). Key aspects included:

- The RPSC historically had a strong relationship with the Northland Mayoral Forum and councils to work through the priorities and issues for the region.
- The role had been developed by the Public Service Commissioner and Head of Service to promote a more co-ordinated approach across the various agencies. The role was said to have 'accountability and influence' and was 'effectively working to make the region a better place'.
- There were a range of issues that need to be addressed including, but not limited to , infrastructure, health, housing, youth crime, family violence, youth attendance, addiction and mental health.
- The RPSC had engaged with Ministers to elevate key issues and offered ongoing support to the Mayoral Forum to facilitate engagement with Ministers.
- The RPSC undertook to advocate the need for the hospital to be upgraded and greater accessibility to health services in general in Northland.
- It was noted that there were a number of small groups doing valuable work in the community (*The Arapohue Retreat – Wild Side Charitable Trust was provided as an example*) which were in need of funding support.

### Moved (Cocurullo/Jepson)

That the update from the Regional Public Service Commissioner for Northland be noted,.

Carried

## Te Whatu Ora Localities and Boundary Determination (Item 5.2)

The Chief Executive of Te Taumata Hauora o Te Kahu o Taonui Iwi Māori Partnership Board, Boyd Broughton, joined the meeting via audio-visual link to provide an update on boundary mapping. Key aspects included:

- The role of the Chief Executive of the Māori Partnership Board was to further the health aspirations in Northland and Auckland.
- There were six 'localities' from Auckland to Te Hiku. Kaitiāia had been used as 'prototype locality' and had received investment to run prototype programmes, including mental health and addiction programmes. The other localities were at different stages of formation.
- Currently there was a pause until such time the Minister confirmed the direction of health reform and localities.

- Access to health services was a key challenge with reportedly six week waiting times to see a GP in the Far North and even 2-3 weeks in Auckland. It was also advised that approximately 30,000 Northland residents were not registered with a GP so did not receive regular health care.
- Other growing challenges included housing, methamphetamine addiction, gang activity, roads in disrepair and the cost of living.
- The ‘call’ to the Northland councils was to keep these issues front of mind and to have ‘a strong united voice’ supporting the health of the region.
- Ngati Hine Health was recognised for the role it played delivering health services across multiple localities. However, many services such as this were over-prescribed.

### **Presentation: The University Scholars Leadership Symposium (Item 5.3)**

Mr Darius Martin-Baker was in attendance to share his experience attending the 11th Edition of The University Scholars Leadership Symposium United Nations – Bangkok, Thailand in August 2023. Darius was sponsored by WDC, FNDC and NRC councils to attend the summit. Key aspects of the briefing included:

- Appreciation was extended to the councils for their financial support which allowed Darius to attend the symposium.
- The event was designed for emerging world leaders, which focused on humanitarian issues and developing leaders to bring about social change.
- The summit was described as a ‘transformative event’. Events included the opening ceremony with inspirational speakers such as the United Nations Secretary-General Sung-Hwan Kim, and a ‘Kindness Day’ where attendees participated in charitable activities such as removing debris from rivers, mangrove clearing and tree planting.
- A presentation at the summit explaining how oysters had been used to filter out pollution from the Hudson River in New York had inspired Darius to research whether native New Zealand freshwater mussels could be used to improve the water quality at Lake Omapere (*the NRC Chair undertook to forward contact details for the Chair of the Omapere Trust to progress this initiative*).

### **Northland | Forward Together Review (Item 5.4)**

#### **Report from Darryl Jones, NRC Economist**

Key aspects of the discussion included:

- As part of the Triennial Agreement there was the direction for the Northland | Forward Together Strategic Vision and Values document to be reviewed. This review determined there was content and measures outside of councils’ ambit. It also proposed that a much more streamlined document be approved, retaining the four main pillars within the original document but also aligning with the five key areas identified by the Northland Mayoral Forum.
- It was questioned whether rail infrastructure should be included in the Infrastructure objective (*as opposed to Economy*). It was also suggested that there needed to be reference made to air travel (*since rail, road and sea travel were covered*).
- It was stressed that the document must reflect what could actually be achieved during the remainder of the triennium.
- It was further stressed that Northland needed to be self-sufficient with the Marsden Refinery an example of this whereby fuel was no longer generated locally and had a ‘drastic’ impact on the economy.

- NRC undertook to develop some high level priorities in relation to the Environmental objective (*noting that environmental factors overarched all the other objectives*) and circulate via email seeking agreement amongst members.
- The revised format of the Northland|Forward Together Strategic document to be presented at the next Northland|Forward Together Strategic Planning Workshop (*19 March 2024*) before being presented to each council for endorsement.
- As an aside there was interest in developing a policy around mangrove removal with an aim of ‘making sure our harbours are clean environments and easy to access’. The NRC, as the regulator, could not be involved in mangrove removal but undertook to circulate the existing rules as contained with the Regional Plan and also the National Policy Statement.

## **Regional Infrastructure Proposals (Item 5.5)**

Key aspects of the discussion included:

- It was proposed that the four Northland councils collectively prioritised the regional infrastructure projects they wanted to promote for government funding.
- Northland Inc. was also identifying priority projects under the fast tracking consenting process and these needed to be aligned with that of the councils.
- At this time there was an ‘information vacuum’ and it was unclear what the government’s direction was in terms of City and Regional Infrastructure deals; however it was clear that economy would be the ‘keen focus’.
- The DIA was currently developing a framework/criteria and the Northland councils needed to be engaged to be as prepared as possible for its release.
- As a region, Northland also needed to identify those projects that were regional based (for example four-laning and the hospital) and those that were locally based (for example the Ruakaka wastewater plant).
- It was questioned whether the list should include those items that government had already committed to fund. In response it was stressed that these must be included to demonstrate the region’s support for these projects.
- The matter would be addressed further at the next Chief Executives’ Forum (4 March 2024).

## **Update on City Deals (Item 5.6)**

This matter was covered in the previous Item 5.5.

## **Update on Sport Northland (Item 5.7)**

This item was not addressed as the supporting information had not been received.

## **Northland Mayoral Forum Engagement with central government (Item 5.8)**

Key aspects of the discussion included:

- It was questioned how the Northland Mayoral Forum best co-ordinate its engagement with Wellington; whether this be through continued regular, co-ordinated visits to the Capital (*which had proven more successful than councils travelling individually*) or another approach.
- The Mayor of Auckland had offered for Northland to participate in any Ministers engagements they organised. There was some concern raised that Northland’s ‘voice’ could be lost in comparison to that of the ‘Super-city’.

- It was stressed that Northland needed to take every single opportunity for the region. However it was also stressed that while ‘what is good for Auckland is good for Northland it can’t be at the cost of Northland’.
- It was stressed that all Northland elected members must ‘sing from the same song sheet’ when advocating with Ministers but it was absolutely critical there was one source of truth – and this must be issued by the Northland Mayoral Forum. A map or ‘plan on a page’ may be the most effective way of doing this.
- It was anticipated that a draft list of projects would be developed at the next Chief Executives’ Forum (4 March 2024) and this would take into account the fast tracking projects being identified by Northland Inc.
- As an aside it was stated that a number of councils were proposing to withdraw their membership from Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ). It was noted that councils had different experiences and satisfaction with LGNZ. However, in FNDC’s case it benefitted greatly from the association. I was acknowledged there were justified concerns but the councils should look at opportunities to fix the issues rather than withdrawing membership. For example, Mayor Tepania who was the current LGNZ representative on the LGNZ National Council proffered the position to others if this allowed more ability to address concerns.
- It was stressed that the LGNZ National Council was ‘open as a governance board’ that was ‘committed to being there for every council member’.

### **Water reform update (Item 5.8)**

Key aspects of the discussion included:

- The Water Services Acts Repeal Bill had been passed and it was advised that local government had 12 months to provide water service plans.
- Kaipara District Council acknowledged it could not go alone in this space and was interested in having further conversations with Auckland (*being on its northern boundary*) and the Northland councils. This would be a key focus for the council given the tight timeframes.
- Far North District Council was exploring all options with a key focus being delivery and building infrastructure.
- Concern was raised that any arrangements outside of the Northland regional also directed capital outside of the region. On the other hand such an arrangement could be viewed as ‘another contractor to provide a solution’.
- Whangarei District Council was in a ‘good space’ and could offer asset management and professional services to the other councils; but would need to scale up to do so. However it could not be funding the other councils to find a solution.
- There was general agreement for each of the councils to continue information gathering and having the discussions they saw fit in order to progress toward a solution and keep each other up to date. The matter to be discussed again at the next Northland Mayoral Forum (27 May 2024).

### **Regional Transport Committee and relationship with Waka Kotahi (Item 5.9)**

Key aspects of the discussion included:

- The outcome of the Section 17A review of the Northland Transportation Alliance was due to be issued by the end of the week and was likely to result in changes.
- The NRC Chair suggested an independently facilitated session with all the elected members to address the concerns around the NTA to determine whether the councils remained in alliance. It was stressed if there was general agreement that the intent of the NTA was correct then it needed to focus on appropriate governance oversight.

- It was absolutely critical that as a first step the Chief Executives must have the opportunity to address any repercussions in relation to impacts on staff.
- It was further stressed that neither the Regional Transport Committee (RTC) or NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) had authority over the NTA and were not responsible for processing the outcome of the review.
- One of the key consideration for councils was balancing the expectation of central government that local government worked together at a regional level against the actual delivery on the ground.
- There was general agreement that this matter needed to be progressed as an utmost priority and should be the key focus of discussions at the next Northland|Forward Together Strategic Planning Workshop (19 March 2024).
- There was further agreement for the Chair of the Northland Mayoral Forum to issue correspondence to all elected members outlining the process. This to cover off a number of elements including, but not limited to, the confidentiality surrounding the matter and also that RTC and NZTA did not have jurisdiction over the NTA. This to be socialised with all the Mayors/Chair to ensure they were comfortable with the content before being circulated.

### **Round the Table - Strategic Priorities (KDC, WDC, FNDC, NRC) (Item 5.10)**

The discussion focussed on the fact that Minister Jones was using the fast tracking consenting process to progress a bypass to State Highway 1 over the Brynderwyns. While the Northland councils had provided input to ensure all options were considered, NZTA would make the final decision. It was also stressed that the government had a 'duty of care' to find a solution and support with regular communications.

### **Whakamutunga (Conclusion)**

The meeting concluded at 12.50pm.