

His Worship the Mayor
Auckland Council

Tena Koe Len

Rodney Local Board Key Messages for the Long-term Plan 2015-2025 Consideration

The Rodney Local Board welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Long-term Plan 2015-2025. This letter outlines the proposals that the local board consider should inform the plan's development.

We appreciate the time you spent visiting our local board, seeing first-hand the vastness and uniqueness of Rodney. As highlighted, the geography of Rodney means that local facilities, parks, events and programmes that help to build strong and inclusive communities are fundamental needs. The size of the local board area means that our residents are unable to travel quickly or easily to a neighbouring park, facility or other local board area. If we only have one facility in any of our townships this is the only option for our area and is unlikely to attract residents from our other towns which can be up to 60 kilometres or more away.

Every one of our towns and villages look to their own strengths and through community led place-making this local board supports and builds community capacity. We work extensively with our residents and stakeholders to leverage greater gains than council could deliver on its own.

Rodney knows and understands that the Long-term Plan must balance investment with affordability. In the rural local board areas the policy on reducing the rates differential between rural, business and residential ratepayers should be reviewed. It is important that residents see some value for the rates and while we acknowledge the compact city theory it cannot be at the expense of the rural ratepayers.

Local boards understand that if rates increases are to be held below those in the current Long-term Plan, a primary lever is the council's capital programme. The Rodney Local Board consider that rates should be set higher than 2.5% as reliance on an arbitrary figure is not appropriate. At a minimum the rate of inflation should be considered as well as including an increase in the business differential as the ability to recoup costs like GST and other tax benefits are available to them.

Local procurement offers opportunities for cost savings. Our local board have experienced cost increases for projects which often results in delays or cancelling of work. There are opportunities to use local contractors but the current policy has limited their ability to tender for work. We have numerous examples where an approved council contractor has received the contract then sub-contracts to a local provider at a lower cost and charges a commission

to the sub-contractor for the work. There must be a number of better ways that getting value for money by using local contractors and businesses as a key goal for procurement.

Our local board have been keen to identify alternate funding mechanisms such as public private partnerships and working more effectively with business and central government are supported. We have received a request from some local residents to cost-share the sealing of their rural road. The opportunity to find new ways of delivering services and infrastructure is a viable option in the north. We would also like to note that the Rodney Local Board have been extremely frugal with funds, for example, voting to operate out of an existing Auckland Council building outside its boundary in order to save ratepayers money.

An important fact is that local activities account for just 11% of the Auckland Council budget. 10% of this allocation is tied to local assets with just 1% available for the local board's discretion. This 1% is key for community initiatives and place-making with the priorities for the local board area clearly stated in our local board plan.

The 2014 local board plans are currently being consulted on. There has been extensive community engagement (February to July) and the plans provide a valuable picture of what is important to our local board area. Rodney received a high number of submissions and will continue to work collaboratively with our community organisations to develop their priorities for our plan.

While a number of local boards are advocating for funding new facilities, we focus on making the most of existing facilities. If we have them, we seek to maintain and develop our parks and reserve areas and look at ways to enhance and support our town centres. We support the concept of multi-use as this is a sensible approach and we have community-owned halls that we support when we can, as they provide real value to our communities. It is often the small things that make a difference as we have few options, if a facility such as a gym or swimming pool doesn't exist it doesn't mean we don't need these types of facilities.

Local boards understand the Long-term Plan prioritisation framework of the transformational shifts and we agree with the focus on 'Moving to outstanding public transport within one network' and 'Radically improving the quality of urban living' however, in the rural environment we have different needs which are often not reflected in these two shifts. As we are seen as being outside the urban boundary, infrastructure for our towns and villages is not seen as a priority for funding. We also have a focus on protecting and enhancing the environment and so the transformational shift 'Strongly commit to environmental action and green growth' remains important to the values we hold across our coastal and rural environments.

So, if we look to the Auckland Plan and the broad ranging transformational shifts within the plan, this local board would urge consideration be given to:

- a. The reliance on transport focused models (ART) to determine priorities for the funding of infrastructure that fails to address the current demands for infrastructure outside the urban edge in Warkworth, Wellsford and Helensville. The assumptions of the ART model suggest a reduction of households and population but the reality is different. The current and future

demand for community facilities and assets that meet the needs of our growing population are evident and real. The latest Census figures reflect this reality. We urge a review of the modelling information to ensure that funding can be allocated to areas of demand not a set of assumptions that are not based on reality.

- b. A better balance of spending between region wide and local initiatives (noting that currently only 11% of spending is on local initiatives).
- c. The importance of community led place-making and community development to all parts of a liveable city. This includes cutting red-tape for our community organisations so they can get on do projects in our communities and townships.
- d. Addressing legacy inequities in investment and service provision (noting the Finance and Performance Committee resolution on 20 February 2014 that issues relating to differing asset based service levels will be considered as part of the planning process for the long-term plan).
- e. Providing for growth areas that are outside the compact city urban edge (including Special Housing Areas) that result in demand for infrastructure that cannot be ignored by a focus on the urban centre.
- f. Enabling local board plan initiatives that reflect community needs and preferences ascertained through extensive engagement in 2014.
- g. The urgent need for a review of how development contributions are charged, allocated and spent.
- h. The deferral of capital projects (including renewals) which will cost more in future years and potentially have increased compliance costs if delayed.
- i. A comprehensive review of Auckland Transport including delegations, levels of service, procurement, accountability and allocation of Local Board Transport Capital Fund.
- j. Seeking realistic funding levels from central government for the partnerships with iwi as a result of treaty settlements where initial set-up costs are left to council rather than being supported by central government.

Each local board welcomes the opportunity to have ongoing discussions with the governing body on how to meet the challenges of delivering on the Auckland Plan within affordable parameters. There are better ways of working collaboratively and local boards can make agreed priorities a reality.

Nga mihi nui

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Steele', written in a cursive style.

Brenda Steele

Chairperson