

Local Boards letter to Auckland Mayor Len Brown

October 14, 2014, letter from the 21 local boards to Auckland Mayor Len Brown.

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14/10/2014

Your Worship the Mayor

LOCAL BOARD CHAIRS FORUM RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LONG TERM PLAN

We the elected chairs of 21 local boards offer this as our collective response to your proposed Long Term Plan budget.

Our work at the local level means that we understand the implications of the organisation's response to your proposal. We would like to be part of a conversation with the Governing Body to enable a shared understanding and consideration as to whether these implications are the intent of Auckland Council.

In 2009 the Royal Commission on Auckland examined the region's legacy governance arrangements. The Commission determined that citizens and businesses get poorer services than they hope for, at a higher cost than necessary. At the same time the Commission expressed concern that a move to a unitary governance model should not create an organisational monolith, unconnected to the people it serves.

Your Worship, in November 2010, you made the following statements in your inaugural address:

"... I presented a vision of an inclusive and united Auckland. An Auckland proud of its diversity and the rich, exciting, vibrant cultures of all its citizens, who work together to achieve their city's potential. A city of proud local communities, secure in their local identities and in their place as part of a metropolitan powerhouse."

In an apparent nod to local services, you said:

"... For our families and communities to flourish, we will provide them with the parks and pools to be active, the libraries to learn, and the theatres and galleries to foster the creative talents of our artists and performers."

To commence the new era in Auckland's governance, you challenged Auckland:

"... History is whispering in our ears. This is our opportunity to unite, to summon the energy to deliver on our aspirations. Let's make it happen. Auckland, it really is our time."

The energy and momentum coming into the new Auckland Council demonstrated willingness on the part of Aucklanders to put aside their concerns and aim for a new beginning. We as local board chairs, some of whom have served since establishment in November 2010, have worked tirelessly to put into practice your aspirational words. In effect, your vision for inclusion, equity, and unity, has been our calling.

However, as local board chairs we have witnessed cuts in funding for local priorities. Community-based innovation has been stifled through policy that has in the most part ignored Local Board feedback over that of officer's recommendations.

The Mayoral proposal and the organisational response to your Worship's proposal will result in significant reductions in local asset based services. We recommend a priority reset and request that

the shared governance model be respected. This includes ensuring that decision making on the Long-term Plan 2015-2025 is informed by local board plan priorities, as envisaged by the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009.

Across the 21 local boards in the local board plans there is common support for the areas listed below. Note that local boards have generally focused on necessary upgrades and refurbishments of existing facilities to make them fit for purpose rather than building new facilities.

- a. Connected and affordable public transport
- b. Refurbishment of existing community facilities
- c. Progression of economic development plans and skills to jobs pathways
- d. Upgrades of sports fields
- e. Upgrades to town centres
- f. Remediation of waterways
- g. Support and funding for community groups, volunteers and community led programmes, including environmental programmes
- h. Cycleways and walkways
- i. Protection of built and cultural heritage for example through heritage surveys and trails
- j. Weed management and pest control
- k. Redevelopment of existing libraries

We are seeking a fairer balance of activities to ensure that local board plan priorities are appropriately represented in the LTP. Local boards would like to have visibility of the entire LTP proposed budgets to inform a reprioritisation discussion with the Governing Body.

We do not consider that the organisation's response is the only response, and would like to see more options put forward. In particular, Parks, Community and Lifestyle is subject to significant reductions in comparison to other activity areas. This is of key interest to local boards as through our extensive local board plan engagement we know that our communities value local facilities, parks and events for the liveability of their neighbourhood and to help build strong and inclusive communities. The organisational response to the Mayoral proposal is that no new asset based projects will occur from 2015- 2020 unless they are 100% funded by development contributions or are under contract. We would like to see options that consider balancing the cuts to Parks, Community and Lifestyle.

In addition through attending the various Budget Committee and LTP specific workshops we have particular concerns about:

The pressure being placed on local boards programme budgets - as a result of the organisations response to the Mayoral proposal, local boards are being asked to use their programme budgets (for events, community development, local initiatives etc.) which represent 1% of Council's total budget, to fund local assets.

If we take this approach, within several years all programmes budgets will be eliminated as they will be funding the consequential operating costs for our capital assets.

Transparency on the financial model that supports the Mayoral Proposal. An ability to view the budget that supports the proposal would be of enormous benefit to Local Boards as they set their own 10 year plan.

Whether the proposal provides for adequate renewals - the organisational response allows for 80% of funding for like for like renewals. For local boards to make the most of existing assets an adequate renewals budget, fully funded through effective asset management plans, is essential. There is a risk that 'sweating' assets and only covering basic renewals will cause a backlog of required investment that Auckland will pay for in the long term. We hold significant concerns over the current allocation of the renewals budget. It is our view that local community assets are left

wanting through a decision by Auckland Council Treasury to use a percentage of renewal monies to pay down debt.

The future liveability of our existing urban areas - while it is important to support greenfield developments with appropriate infrastructure, the revival of degraded urban areas and community infrastructure for urban growth areas remains important for creating the world's most liveable city.

Finding the right community-led community development approach. Local boards support a greater focus on local delivery of community development, but this needs careful planning and funding to build community capacity in appropriate timeframes.

The ability for communities to engage with Auckland Council on a range of meaningful LTP options that go beyond the transport options.

The reduction in the ability of council to leverage development contributions in future years as a result of the organisation's response to proposed funding envelopes.

We also see the need for increased governance to governance working on financial policy development with a focus in particular on the UAGC and business differential.

To conclude, as local board chairs we understand that need to balance investment and affordability. Our request to reconsider priorities is therefore about rebalancing. Our preference is to work in the shared governance model with both arms of governance working together. We acknowledge that the Governing Body bear the responsibility to set an affordable level of rates increase while local boards, in particular, bear the community response to reduced levels of service. Both arms of governance therefore have a strongly vested interest in the LTP and important contributions to make at a governance level. Working collectively has to be the imperative.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Local Board Chairs

Peter Haynes	Albert-Eden
Mike Cohen	Devonport-Takapuna
Andy Baker	Franklin
Susan Daly (Deputy Chair)	Great Barrier
Vanessa Neeson	Henderson-Massey
Greg Sayers (Deputy Chair)	Hibiscus and Bays
David Collings	Howick
Kay McIntyre	Kaipātiki
Lydia Sosene	Māngere-Ōtāhuhu
Angela Dalton	Manurewa
Simon Randall	Maungakiekie-Tamaki
Desley Simpson	Orakei
Fa'anānā Efeso Collins	Otara-Papatoetoe
Bill McEntee	Papakura
Julie Fairey	Puketāpapa
Brenda Steele	Rodney
Brian Neeson	Upper Harbour
Paul Walden	Waiheke
Sandra Coney	Waitākere Ranges
Shale Chambers	Waitemātā
Catherine Farmer	Whau