

# WHANGANUI DISTRICT COUNCIL

Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

## MINUTES

**Policy and Bylaw Committee Meeting**

**20 April 2021**

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**MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND BYLAW COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, 101 GUYTON STREET, WHANGANUI  
ON 20 APRIL 2021 AT 10.00AM**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Hamish McDouall, Deputy Mayor Jenny Duncan, Cr Charlie Anderson, Cr Philippa Baker-Hogan, Cr Josh Chandulal-Mackay, Cr Helen Craig, Cr Kate Joblin, Cr Hadleigh Reid, Cr Alan Taylor, Cr Graeme Young, Cr James Barron (from 10.17am)

**APOLOGIES:** Cr Brent Crossan, Cr Rob Vinsen

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Stephanie Macdonald-Rose (Group Manager – Corporate), Shaona Raj (Democracy Support Officer), Jasmine Hessel (Team Leader – Policy)

**1 APOLOGIES**

**Apology**

**Committee Resolution PBC/2021/6**

Moved: Mayor Hamish McDouall

Seconded: Cr Helen Craig

That the Policy and Bylaw Committee accepts the apologies of Crs Rob Vinsen and Brent Crossan and grants leave of absence for this meeting.

**CARRIED**

**Speaking Rights - Whanganui Rural Community Board Member**

**Committee Resolution PBC/2021/7**

Moved: Cr Alan Taylor

Seconded: Deputy Mayor Jenny Duncan

That the Policy and Bylaw Committee grant Michael Dick speaking rights at this meeting.

**CARRIED**

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no new declarations of interest.

### 3 REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

#### 3.1 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY - TE RAUTAKI HURINGA AHURANGI - HEARINGS REPORT

**Author:** Jasmine Hessel - Team Leader Policy

**Authoriser:** Stephanie Macdonald-Rose - Group Manager - Corporate

**Significance of decision** – In terms of the Significance and Engagement Policy 2018, the decision is not significant.

**Discussion:**

Team Leader - Policy Jasmine Hessel spoke. She thanked submitters for their work and acknowledged the large amount of work involved with preparation of the Strategy.

All submitters were advised of the 10 minute limit, including questions.

Insurance Council of New Zealand

The Insurance Council's submission was in favour of mitigation and adaptation. Their submission set out a number of practical ways for the public to adapt. This included: not developing in geographically vulnerable areas, embracing collaboration between regional and city councils, educating the public to make responsible decisions with their assets, prioritise mitigation and adaptation, helping buildings to become resilient and support vulnerable groups where possible.

Cr Taylor asked whether ICNZ had assessed risk on a territorial level and if they were willing to advise the Council, which was not possible due to resource constraints.

The Mayor asked about what gradations of risk were there for Whanganui in the next 20 to 30 years. They stated insurance would not apply to sea level rise but would apply to freak storm events. The presenters answered insurers would need to assess tolerable risk in the area. They added it was impossible to eliminate all risk but insurers could research risks and how they change over time.

The Mayor asked for advice about building for flood risk. The presenters answered properties could be built to be moved, but preferred techniques depended on the city, property location, risks and options available.

Ross Skilton

Mr Skilton expressed concerns about prioritising climate change above all else, believing it was contributing to unjustified panic. He stated current popular climate change science was driven by the pursuit of profit. He felt council efforts should be focused on pollution. Climate change could be solved by helping lifting developing nations out of poverty and investigating alternative forms of energy. His preferred approach was adaptation over mitigation and he expressed faith in humankind's ability to adapt.

The Mayor commented he was unable to comment on overseas issues.

Cr Taylor asked about Mr Skilton's position on sustainable power and its reliability. Mr Skilton commented that according to his research no one had died as a result of nuclear energy and deaths due to nuclear power were freak accidents.

Cr Barron asked Mr Skilton who benefited from climate change. Mr Skilton answered activists, the media, and scientists. He stated sources of funding (e.g. the government) had the power to distort scientific process and for this reason, he was wary of current popular climate change science.

Cr Craig asked about his position on electric vehicles and their batteries. Mr Skilton answered it was possible to move away from fossil fuels within 80 years but society would not cope if the transition was done too quickly. It was possible to recycle batteries.

#### Keith Beutrais

Mr Beutrais summed up his credentials and his career in education and conservation. He likened the Earth's forests and oceans to a set of lungs currently being destroyed by acidification of oceans and destruction of habitats. He congratulated the Council on declaring a climate emergency, particularly Cr Taylor for his research and advocacy on the subject. He praised the inclusion of te ao Maori in the document as he felt the dominant Western worldview has an exploitative relationship with nature, whereas te ao Maori emphasises humans belong to nature. He felt Council's current challenge was to demonstrate urgent, practical and measurable change.

Cr Taylor asked whether his view was that the strategy needed to have greater emphasis on education. Mr Beutrais answered yes, suggesting Council lead projects involving youth and adding his own experience with similar initiatives had a positive response from children.

#### Heather Smith

Ms Smith congratulated the Council on the Draft Strategy. She spoke of the social credit movement worldwide and its history in New Zealand. Her view was that the current neoliberal debt funding model was a major barrier to solving environmental issues as it was based on a philosophy of selfishness. She suggested an alternative to the current model was a 'gifting economy' centred on gifting to the next generation and not burdening them with debt.

#### Whanganui Federated Farmers

The presenters took issue with the Horizons report on which the Strategy is based, stating the statistics in the report were accurate but based on an outdated reporting method. They stated the statistics were based on actual amounts of greenhouse gases but should be based on the warming potential of gases. They spoke in preference of a 'split gas' approach, which considers splitting warming gases into the three types (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane).

The presenters stated the split gas approach shows that carbon dioxide is the most common greenhouse gas in the Whanganui district and nitrous oxide is the most warming of the greenhouse gases. They felt that Council should focus on reducing carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions, not methane emissions (primarily emitted by farming).

The Mayor pointed out the draft advice from the Climate Change Commission issued to the Government uses a split gas approach.

The presenters were concerned that encouraging forestry crops would negatively impact the Whanganui economy. They explained the rate of return to the district would be higher from pastoral use rather than forestry and expressed concerns that any profits from forestry would not return to Whanganui.

Cr Craig asked the presenters to comment on carbon credits and prices. The presenters answered currently carbon credits were priced at \$37 to \$40 per unit and the Climate Change Commission report recommended there be a cap of \$70 per unit and up to \$140 by 2030 to ensure offset credits remain reasonably affordable. It would mean petrochemicals would be more expensive but forestry owners stood to gain.

Mark Brimblecombe

The Chairperson gave permission for Mr Brimblecombe to film his presentation.

He felt the Strategy needed to reflect the Council's climate change emergency declaration and that it was too late to mitigate the effects of climate change. He explained there was no point in mitigating emissions, as greenhouse gases operate in a feedback loop and take 20 years to have practical effect.

Cr Taylor asked him if there was a danger in focusing on mitigation rather than adapting to climate change. Mr Brimblecombe answered New Zealanders needed to focus on adapting to sustain their current lifestyle. He added New Zealand was fortunate that a large proportion of energy was produced sustainably, and that a global perspective was needed as global change affects Whanganui.

David James

Mr James introduced himself and his extensive experience in adult education. He agreed with the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency but felt current thinking led to unproductive panic. He called for Council to encourage a more positive mindset.

He mentioned Kate Raworth and her 'doughnut economics' model. The model aims to promote a balance between social and ecological needs. He felt a wider ecological focus was required instead of merely focusing on climate change. He suggested climate change could be an impetus to transfer to a better model of living that considers meeting social needs within ecological constraints.

He felt Council needed to get the vast majority of the Whanganui district engaged with climate change, in the same way as the COVID-19 response. He felt Council should demonstrate leadership and requested the Council provide the public with ongoing information regarding implementation and progress on the Strategy. He also requested Council involve as much of the public as possible, including businesses, community groups, media and the wider community.

Cr Barron asked whether the presenter would approve of a dashboard showing key measures of environmental sustainability. Mr James answered he would. Cr Joblin asked Mr James for advice on considering youth during the deliberations. Mr James answered social media was key.

Lorna Sutherland

Mrs Sutherland described an email exchange with Professor James Renwick, a climate scientist at Victoria University. In it, Dr. Renwick advised climate change was serious, but it was not too late to reverse its effects if emissions were reduced urgently. He also stated feedback loops do not operate autonomously and would not continue if carbon dioxide emissions ceased. She expressed fears an alarmist approach would lead to unjustified inaction. She mentioned New Zealanders currently use six times their allotted share of the global carbon budget and present generations owed it to future generations to reduce their usage.

The Mayor asked Mrs Sutherland what the IPCC was. Mrs Sutherland answered it is a worldwide network of scientists who work to review sources of climate-related information. Members were experts who peer review research using a rigorous process.

The Mayor acknowledged Mrs Sutherland and her late husband's efforts to protest for action on climate change matters.

*The Mayor left at 11.59am.*

*The Deputy Mayor assumed the role of Chairperson.*

Gordon Dryden

Mr Dryden described climate change as an urgent and difficult issue. He felt Council should form an agency (whether a person or group) to combat climate change. He also felt Council should work to reduce stock farming-related emissions. His presentation focused on reducing biogenic methane emissions (methane emitted by stock animals). He discussed the latest amendment to the Climate Change Response Act requiring methane emissions to be reduced to 10% below 2017 levels by 2030. He suggested Council introduce a regulatory agency to collate and disseminate information, advise farmers on how to integrate required changes, and monitor compliance with the Act.

Cr Taylor explained Mr Dryden's suggestions were outside Council's mandate but asked if he would support the setup of climate reference groups involving iwi. Mr Dryden was supportive. Cr Duncan added she felt it best to appoint a senior individual to any such role.

David Bennett

Mr Bennett largely disagreed with the Draft Strategy but was supportive of the provisions related to waste minimisation. He felt it was too late to stop global warming, citing examples of industry overseas and the projected increase in the human population as justification for his reasoning. He described global warming as ushering in the end of a Biblical age.

Cr Chandulal-Mackay asked Mr Bennett if he disagreed with the Council's ability to mitigate emissions. Mr Bennett answered yes. Cr Chandulal-Mackay asked whether Mr Bennett agreed that Council should adapt to extreme weather events. He answered Whanganui has always been prone to extreme weather events and that it was possible to adapt to the new climate but that it was too late to stop the effect of rising carbon emissions.

*The Mayor returned and resumed the role of Chairperson at 12.25pm.*

eHaus (Caitlin Brown and Jon Iliffe, in place of Glenda Brown)

Ms Brown and Mr Iliffe are employees of eHaus, a national company specialising in building energy efficient/passive housing. The presenters applauded Council for declaring a climate emergency. However, they felt the wording of the Draft Strategy did not reflect there was an emergency and encouraging businesses and individuals to cut emissions was not enough. They also gave examples of successful council-led passive housing initiatives internationally and locally and spoke about the triple bottom line approach (environmental, social and financial bottom lines). They were happy to recommend action points to Council.

Cr Taylor asked the presenters to explain the last sentence in their submission about transportation. The presenters answered there was some ambiguity and more action was needed besides merely managing risks.

The Mayor asked for clarification of the bullet point at page 2 of their submission regarding agriculture (page 116 of the Volume of Submissions). He asked whether the submission requested specific actions regarding agricultural activity, or whether it was an overall request to be mindful. The presenters answered the statement was intended as an overall request to be mindful of competing considerations when considering taking action.

The Mayor asked the presenters about retrofitting houses to be passive. The presenters answered it was possible but challenging, and it was best to encourage building new passive homes instead.

Cr Craig asked whether heritage buildings could be retrofitted and whether local expertise was available to achieve that. The presenters answered it was possible to do so via an architect.

Graham and Lyn Pearson

Mr and Mrs Pearson felt the Council needed to stop considering climate change through a purely economic lens and favoured a circular economy instead. The presenters expressed concerns about recycling and waste. They asked for more efficient rubbish pickup and requested Council lobby central government on the subject of plastic container recycling. They also felt stormwater runoff and felt runoff could be conserved under a circular economy instead. They also expressed concerns about the loss of wetland in the Mosston Rd area but commended the Council for introducing zero waste initiatives in schools.

Graham Feist

Mr Feist was critical of the strategy as he believed the strategy was based on incorrect science. He stated his research showed geological records demonstrated the warming process was not caused by humans but by the solar system.

Cr Taylor asked whether Mr Feist wanted Council to alter or abandon the strategy. Mr Feist answered he wanted the Draft Strategy to address the process not the outcome of global warming. Cr Baker-Hogan asked whether Mr Feist preferred an adaptation or mitigation strategy. Mr Feist preferred an adaptation strategy.

**Questions and answers with Policy staff members:**

Cr Craig commented farming needed to be supported to adapt. She added that Council did not have the ability to impose passive house standards on others, but Council could look at doing so for Council owned properties and heritage sites and encourage the adoption of passive housing standards. She also requested the Strategy include greater reference to preserving existing sites in the CBD as she felt preserving older buildings was more environmentally friendly than building new ones.

Cr Joblin asked how urgency could be incorporated into the strategy. Cr Taylor suggested the action plan could include reference to urgency and the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency.

Cr Taylor asked whether any decisions around an action plan would be made at the deliberations stage on 27 April. The Mayor answered the strategy would inform the action plan. The Team Leader - Policy added the draft strategy had some action points in it that elicited a strong response from submitters. The Group Manager - Corporate explained she was working on a position description for a Climate Change Advisor role. She added the deliberations would be useful to give direction, and the Advisor will have responsibility for putting together an action plan.

The Team Leader - Policy explained adopting the split gas approach would involve rework, mainly around the carbon footprint details at page 21 of the agenda. Cr Craig felt the strategy should be written in a way that considers climate science is constantly evolving.

**Committee Resolution PBC/2021/8**

Moved: Mayor Hamish McDouall

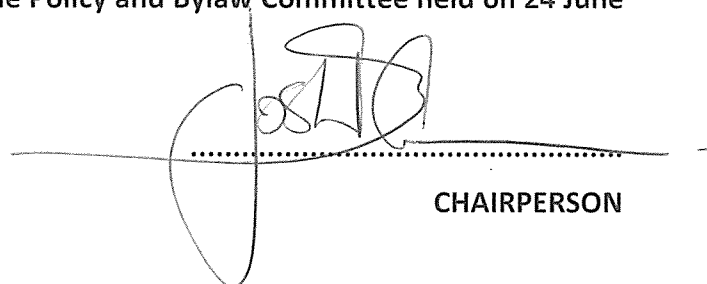
Seconded: Cr Josh Chandulal-Mackay

That the Policy and Bylaws Committee hear the submissions on the draft Climate Change Strategy - Te Rautaki Huringa Ahurangi.

**CARRIED**

The meeting closed at 1.02pm.

The minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the Policy and Bylaw Committee held on 24 June 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop on the left and a more complex, scribbled structure on the right, crossing a horizontal dotted line.

**CHAIRPERSON**

