Waikato Regional Council

Finance Committee

OPEN MINUTES

Date: Monday, 11 February, 2019, 10:00 am
Location: Council Chamber
          Waikato Regional Council
          401 Grey Street
          Hamilton East

Members Present: Cr J Hennebry (Chair)
                 Cr D Minogue
                 Cr S Kneebone
                 Cr B Quayle
                 Cr A Livingston (ex-officio Chairperson)

Staff Present: C Crickett - Director – Integrated Catchment Management
               J van Rossem - Biodiversity Project Manager
               A Thomas - Biodiversity Officer
               L Van Veen - Democracy Advisor

In Attendance: Cr F Lichtwark
               Cr K White
               Phil Lyons – Chief Executive Officer, Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust
1. **Apologies**

The apology from Councillor H Vercoe (Deputy Chair) was received – noting he was on other council business.

**FC19/01**

Moved by: Cr A Livingston  
Seconded by: Cr B Quayle

**RESOLVED**

THAT the apology of Cr H Vercoe (on other council business) be accepted.

The motion was put and carried

2. **Confirmation of Agenda**

It was decided that due to Item 5 on the agenda involving an outside speaker, that this item would be considered ahead of Item 4.

**FC19/02**

Moved by: Cr D Minogue  
Seconded by: Cr J Hennebry

**RESOLVED**

THAT the agenda of the Finance Committee of 11 February 2019 be confirmed as the business for the meeting.

The motion was put and carried

3. **Disclosures of Interest**

There were no disclosures of interest.

4. **Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust - Six Monthly Financial Report July to December 2018**

Presented by the Chief Executive Officer, Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust (MEIT) (Phil Lyons), the report provided a summary of the MEIT operational and financial activity for the period July to December 2018.

During questions, answers and related discussion the following was noted:

- January 2019 saw record visitor numbers to Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari – being 11% ahead year to date. Furthermore, a recent species survey shows an increase in kokako and Hochstetter’s frog populations, highlighting that increased visitor numbers were not affecting flourishing flora and fauna.
- Other highlights over the past few months include sixteen kiwi being released, through partnership with “Kiwis for Kiwi” and a takahe giving birth to twins which is a rare occurrence.
- Work to finalise an asset management plan for the main fence is being undertaken.
• The December monsoon weather resulted in two breaches of the fence. Monitoring showed that the first breach did not result in pest incursion. However, the second breach did result in mice gaining access to the enclosure. These mice were quickly cleared by trapping operations. The fence was sufficiently repaired after both breaches.

• The Trust undertook to provide the committee with an updated profit and loss statement.

• Discussion centred on the current level of funding by key stakeholders and also opportunity for funding from other sources. Multi-year funding contributions are in place, a significant contributor being Trust Waikato providing $100,000 per year with other funders providing similar contributions. Working on building relationships with corporate entities in the hope this will bring further funding opportunities this financial year. Noted the Department of Conservation funding contribution is currently being reviewed.

• November/December figures show low visitor numbers resulting in reduced revenue. Largely due to adverse weather, this was offset by the higher than average visitor numbers in January. Forecasted revenue was still lower than projected, however this was being carefully managed through operational efficiency savings. Confident that the project will achieve budget by end of this financial year.

• Recent employment of a marketing expert can be correlated to the increase in visitor numbers in January. Also looking to bring in high end package tours in order to gain a better yield on foot traffic. Locals still account for 50% of visitors.

• A question was raised re the status of construction of the new entrance. The entrance has been completed and has been in use since 21 January. The new entrance requires a swipe card to access, ensuring improved security and better capturing of revenue from visitors.

• A member queried the process of exporting kiwi from the mountain back to their local areas. A process has been developed in collaboration with iwi and involves release at a certain age or when the mountain capacity reaches 50%. Release was also to be in accordance with set protocol outlined within the associated permits. The mountain has capacity for up to 600 kiwi.

• The Trust is submitting an application for funding of a new education centre to the Lotteries Commission in March.

• A member queried processes in place to ensure spread of kauri dieback disease does not occur. The Trust advised that they are currently developing biosecurity processes in collaboration with the landowners and will provide a progress update in their next report to the committee.
• A member queried whether the annual grant includes GST and whether this was claimed back. Staff confirmed this was the case.
• An update on the governance board was provided, highlighting that Graeme Parker has been recently appointed as a new landowner trustee. This leaves one landowner and one community board vacancy yet to be filled.

FC19/03

Moved by: Cr B Quayle
Seconded by: Cr S Kneebone

RESOLVED


The motion was put and carried

4. Preserve New Chum for Everyone Inc. - Request for Assistance from Natural Heritage Fund
   - An Update

Presented by the Director Integrated Catchment Management (C Crickett), the report provided the committee with an update on the New Chum/Wainuiototo Beach request, received from the group Preserve New Chum for Everyone Inc. (PNCFE), for financial assistance from the Natural Heritage Fund to undertake an ecological survey of the area and for the development of a collaborative ownership and protection model.

During questions, answers and related discussion the following was noted:

• The committee was reminded that the request had been discussed prior at the November Finance Committee with subsequent referral to the December Council meeting for further discussion. The resulting discussion/procedural motion was that the matter be left to lie on the table until sufficient supporting information could be provided back to council.
• Council staff had since contacted one of the relevant landowners who resides in the area and freely obtained technical information being provided to the Environment Court to progress the development. Staff advised there were two affected landowners, one of whom resides overseas and so was not readily contactable. The landowner’s evidence to the Environment Court provides substantial technical information including ecological evidence. The evidence provided was tabled at the committee meeting and is publicly available.
• It was highlighted that PNCFE are a well-recognised group within the Coromandel community, however had not provided evidence of working with the landowner to explore concerns.
• Members raised questions about the ability of district plans to restrict development within areas deemed to have significant natural area or outstanding natural landscape status under the Resource Management Act (RMA).
• The committee determined that due to the fact that the subdivision proposal is already being explored within an RMA process, with ecological evidence being provided into that process, the request for funding should be refused.
• The committee remained open to discussion with the landowner and PNCFE when the outcome of the TCDC district plan process has been confirmed.
• Staff committed to communicating to PNCFE and the relevant landowner the resulting decision of the committee following this meeting.

FC19/04

Moved by: Cr D Minogue
Seconded by: Cr A Livingston

RESOLVED

That the report 'Preserve New Chum for Everyone Inc. - Request for Assistance from Natural Heritage Fund - An Update' (Doc # 13676454 dated 22 January 2019) be received; and

That the request for funding from the Preserve New Chum for Everyone Inc. group to prepare an ecological survey and to develop a collaborative ownership and protection model be declined but the committee remain open to a conversation as to the future of New Chums Beach at the conclusion of the current Resource Management Act process.

The motion was put and carried

The meeting was closed at 11.01am

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Chair