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SUBMISSION TO AUCKLAND COUNCIL 10 YEAR BUDGET 2018-28 , AUCKLAND PLAN AND LOCAL BOARD PRIORITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Parnell Business Association is one of the 48 BIDs in Auckland, together representing over 25,000 businesses with a combined capital value estimated at $24 billion. The Parnell Business Association represents over 1,100 businesses and property value in excess of 1,7 billion.
Auckland Council is seeking feedback on the 10-year Budget (Long Term Plan), the Auckland Plan as well as the Draft Auckland Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018 and Local Board Priorities.

Our feedback is set out below.

10-YEAR BUDGET (LONG TERM PLAN)

The 10-year Budget (Long Term Plan) sets out the Council's priorities and how you will pay for them. You are seeking feedback on a number of issues. Our response will focus on: (1) Introducing a Regional Fuel Tax; (2) Approach to rates; (3) Cleaning up our harbours, beaches and streams; (4) Protecting our Endangered Species; and (5) Other Issues.[1]

(1) Introducing a Regional Fuel Tax

Your Consultation Document says that Council wants to improve the transport system. As the population grows, congestion (and the pollution it creates) is getting worse, safety is declining and businesses are struggling to move freight and people. To address the problems, you say you need to identify new funding sources as Council is at the limit of what it can sustainably borrow. You are proposing that a regional fuel tax of 10 cents per litre (plus GST) be used to raise more funding for transport projects and services.

We agree that congestion (and the pollution it creates) is getting worse, safety is declining and businesses are struggling to move freight and people. We also agree that we are not going to address this problem simply by building more roads. Demand management of our existing network has to be a key solution, especially creating priority for customer collection courier and delivery movements, so that the available road resource can be effectively utilised.

[1] With regard to Local Priorities, each BID will be responding as necessary to its own local board about their priorities. As for the amendments to the Revenue and Financing Policy, please treat our feedback below as also being feedback on that Policy.

However, we do recognise the need to raise more funding for transport projects and service. Our preference is to introduce initiatives that both manage demand and raise funding equitably as soon as possible, balanced with investment into affordable and more frequent public transport in order to effect sustainable behavioural change.[2]

In the interim, we support a regional fuel tax of 10 cents per litre (plus GST). This needs to be linked to a timeframe and any increases capped. It is essential that this tax is hypothecated to spending on specific transport projects and services and is reported on with complete transparency. We ask that the forthcoming Regional Land Transport Plan clearly identify this source of funding and the specific transport projects and services it will be spent on. We wish to avoid the regional fuel tax, which is the equivalent of a significant rates increase (especially for transport operators), being used as a 'top up' for overall transport budgets.

We ask that as the legislation is drafted, you advocate for the GST portion to also be hypothecated to Auckland's transport projects/services and that non-road fuel not be subject to the tax.

To ensure transparency, we also ask that the projects and services being funded by the tax be distributed following a clear rationale and identified clearly in future Council Budgets. We also ask that central government's contribution to Auckland transport funding be included transparently in such budgets so we are clear about its ongoing contribution.

While we understand that the Government can pass the legislation necessary, if for some reason that does not occur and the Interim Transport Levy must remain in place for another year, we support it remaining set as $113.85 for residential and farm/lifestyle ratepayers and $182.85 for business ratepayers.

We note that a regional fuel tax of 10 cents per litre is only a small step towards addressing the funding gap the Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP) identified at $5.9 billion. We request Auckland Council and the Government commit to urgently delivering fair and equitable solutions to fund this gap not only in order to ensure that Auckland's transport system does not grind to a halt, but to enable the continued growth and vitality of New Zealand's largest city.

And finally, while we understand the need for funding for transport project, it is still an additional cost to business.

(2) Your approach to rates

Your Consultation Document says Council needs to continue funding other projects and services for our growing city and that requires an increase to general rates. You are proposing an average general rates increase of 2.5 per cent for years one and two and then 3.5 per cent for years three to ten. The final calculation would also incorporate the additional targeted rates as well as the removal of the Interim Transport Levy.

Our overall feedback is that what businesses need most from Council is a reasonable, transparent and stable approach to rates. In that regard, we support the Council being clear about how general rates increases will be made over time. We also appreciate the funding gap for major infrastructure.

[2] One concern we have with a regional fuel tax is that some people who will use the Auckland motorway system (e.g. driving into Auckland from the regions or driving through Auckland), will purchase fuel outside Auckland and avoid the tax.

However, because businesses are still paying a disproportionately high level of rates, we question whether an overall average urban business increase of 6% (without the accommodation providers targeted rate and fuel tax impact) is justified. Using the Council on-line rates calculator, we found considerable variations within business areas and across the region, with some significantly higher than the average. *(Refer Appendix 1 – Parnell Feedback on General Rates)*

We do not accept the view that a business differential should be applied to rates especially for reasons that "businesses are better able to manage additional costs than residential properties" or because "businesses can claim back GST and expense rates against tax."[3]

These reasons do not justify the business differential, particularly for small businesses who make up most businesses in Auckland. The Shand Report on *Funding Local Government* recommended against rating differentials.

Auckland businesses pay 2.73 times more rates than other ratepayers, or around $150 million more. By comparison, Tauranga City Council has no business rates differential at all.

Finally, we recognise that increases in the UAGC place a greater burden on small businesses and support these being tied to the increases in general rates.

Cleaning up our harbours, beaches and streams

Your Consultation Document says that Council wants to improve infrastructure to save our harbours, beaches and streams from being polluted by overflows from ageing sewerage and stormwater systems, especially in the Western Isthmus. You are proposing a new targeted rate to increase funding of water infrastructure and speed up delivery of cleaner harbours, beaches and streams. This would equate to an average 2.1% rates rise for an urban business ratepayer or 2.0% for a rural business ratepayer.

We agree that Auckland must improve infrastructure to save our harbours, beaches and streams from being polluted by overflows from ageing sewerage and stormwater systems. Inaction will cause reputational damage to the city.

While we are supportive of transparently 'ring fencing' spending on this kind of infrastructure, we do not accept that a business differential (even at 25.8%) should be applied to this targeted rate. We accept that business should pay a share, but not a differential.

Protecting our Endangered Species

Your Consultation Document says that Auckland's rapid growth is putting pressure on the environment, as is the spread of pests, weeds and diseases that are threatening many of our native species. Your proposal is to invest more in environmental initiatives and to fund this through a targeted rate at one of two levels (equating to either an average 0.7% or 1.5% rates rise for an urban business ratepayer or 0.6% or 1.4% for a rural business ratepayer).

We agree overall that Auckland must reverse the decline of biodiversity in the region, stop kauri dieback and address the spread of pests, weeds and diseases.

[3] As set out in Section 7.4 'Natural environment initiatives and funding' of the Additional supporting information to the Long Term Plan. For example, if income for a small business is relatively flat, but there is a significant rates increase, the extra rates expense will impact negatively on the profitability of the business and may even force the business to run at a loss.

However, we note that these matters are not 'core services' under the Local Government Act 2002, but more properly the responsibility of central Government or taxpayers. Auckland Council should seek increased funding from central Government because all New Zealand benefits from increased tourism and our international clean green branding. Auckland ratepayers should not be the first direct source of funding for projects which have a wider benefit than just the Auckland region.

While we are supportive of transparently 'ring fencing' spending on this kind of infrastructure, we do not accept that a business differential (even at 25.8%) should be applied to this targeted rate. We accept that business should pay a share, but not a differential.

(3) Other Issues

There are a range of other issues in your Consultation Document for feedback, such as rating online accommodation providers (like Airbnb), disestablishing Auckland Council Investments Ltd, changes to the CCO Accountability Policy and a few other specific rates and charges.

Savings and efficiencies

We also believe there are more savings available to the Council. We would like the Council to focus more on efficiencies, savings and less on introducing new revenue sources that will increase rates for business. We believe significant savings can be made by reducing silos and improving efficiencies across the Council and CCOs.

We are also aware of escalating head counts of council staff, and reported inflated salaries, while on the ground we experience continual lack of holistic co-ordination and in our perception a tremendous waste of time and resources (both Council and our own).

In addition, the perception of 'value for money' in terms of core council services is eroding day by day. *(Refer 'In Revolt' article by Parnell Planner)*

We welcome the s17A Reviews being undertaken by the Mayor as a means of establishing 'value for money'.

Rating online accommodation providers

With regard to rating online accommodation providers (like Airbnb), we have been told by accommodation providers both locally and regionally that they do not accept that they should fund ATEED's tourism promotion and event costs from this targeted rate.

We still do not support this intervention and our preference is for the Government to introduce a levy on international visitors to fund tourism projects.

For some accommodation providers, the current accommodation providers targeted rate has resulted in a rates increase of 250 per cent or more and for many, a doubling of already significant rates. Some providers have benefitted from exemptions while others have not. This contradicts the Council's view that there should be rates stability. Accommodation providers have also advised us that it is unfair to shift the rates burden to them when only around 10% of the total visitor spend is on commercial accommodation.

However, if the Council decides to retain the accommodation providers targeted rate, then we agree that it should be extended to rating online accommodation providers (like Airbnb).

Finally, on this topic, whilst we appreciate the value of tourism and events to the economy, we ask that Council spending be carefully scrutinised to ensure the returns justify the investment.

Auckland Art Gallery

We urge all Auckland Councillors to support Mayor Phil Goff's proposal of the 1 February 2018 to increase the Auckland Art Gallery's funding by $20m over the next ten years as part of the LTP. We request this amount is targeted for the Auckland Art Gallery when the annual Auckland Council distribution is made to RFA.

Draft CCO Accountability Policy

Section 5.2 Draft CCO Accountability Policy refers to common expectations of a substantive CCO in relation to:-

1.1.1 building public trust and confidence in the council group
1.1.2 providing value for money and
1.1.3 building a group approach to achieve outcomes for Aucklanders with particular reference to:

- *Ensuring excellent customer service, including understanding the communities it serves.*
- *Providing transparent information about the activities and services it provides to the community.*
- *Including customers and communities in decision-making where appropriate*

And that each substantive CCO is to ensure that it provides value for money for Aucklanders, which means achieving the outcomes and levels of service specified by the council as efficiently as possible.

- *Ensuring that investment is supported by robust business cases which meet the standards of any relevant group policies and provide a clear and strategic rationale for investment.*
- *Ensuring that the delivery of activities and services is as efficient as possible*
- *Participating proactively and constructively in efforts to achieve efficiencies and savings for the council group and make the most of its size and scale, including group procurement and the use of shared services.*

We support the Draft CCO Accountability Policy and especially the common expectations to be placed on CCOs of building public trust and confidence, providing value for money and building a group approach.

In particular, we ask that the common expectations reflect a holistic and integrated approach to planning and project design/delivery across the Council group, with clear lines of communication and a commitment to seek local and regional BID input (as appropriate) early enough to influence outcomes and deliver improved results for businesses.

We ask that the expectations reflect a requirement for effective co-ordination of projects within local areas and a “do it once, and do it right” approach to all works and projects, avoiding expensive rework and ensuring a better use of resources.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- A perceived lack of respect for the BID network (and its constituents).
- BIDs are not consistently recognised as key stakeholders servicing an important constituency – Auckland businesses.
- Submissions & feedback are not always taken seriously and not weighted according to area/size of influence. (e.g. Auckland Transport)
- Feedback is often sought too late to influence projects. (e.g. Auckland Transport)
- Communication issues/inefficiency in BID dealings with Council group, particularly with reference to the Auckland Council Call Centre.
- Lack of co-ordination of projects within BID boundaries and across Council group/lack of holistic approach – and silos existing within Council and some CCOs.

THE AUCKLAND PLAN

General

As your Consultation Document says, the Auckland Plan is a statutory spatial plan for Auckland that looks ahead to 2050. It considers how Auckland will address our key challenges of high population growth, shared prosperity, and environmental degradation.[4]

We ask that the proposed Auckland Plan continue to include Directive 6.3 of the current Auckland Plan, that directs Auckland to: "Protect, enhance and improve business-zoned areas and business improvement districts" and also continues to include paragraph 384, which states:

"384_ To boost the economic growth of town centres and business precincts, the Auckland Council has a Business Improvement District (BID) policy to assist local associations. BIDs are funded by targeted rates and allow businesses to use the funding to improve the local business environment and promote business growth in a way that meets their communities' needs. There are currently 46 [now 48] BIDs operating in Auckland, representing over 25,000 businesses. The local boards are joint partners in the BID Partnership Programme with the Business Associations. This relationship will build on established local priorities."

OUTCOME: BELONGING AND PARTICIPATION

In your documentation you note that Auckland is ethnically and culturally diverse. It is home to people from over 120 different ethnicities and that most Aucklanders consider that growing cultural and lifestyle diversity has made Auckland a better place to live.

Auckland is home to people from many places, cultures and traditions. This rich diversity will continue to increase. In the next few decades, Auckland will be home to even greater numbers of people in the broad Asian and Pacific groupings in particular. These communities have already grown substantially over the last few decades. In 2013 almost a quarter (23 per cent) of Auckland residents identified with an Asian ethnicity and Pacific people could increase from 15 per cent to 17 per cent of the Auckland population by 2038.

As our population grows and changes, it is important that we continue to nurture and support our diverse community identities. We must also tap into the skills and talents of all our citizens and create the conditions for everyone to fully participate in society.

We concur with the rich diversity that contributes to our business environment and that is certainly what makes Auckland an exciting place in which to live and do business.
We agree that to be the Auckland that New Zealand needs it to be, it is essential that we support all our people to achieve their social, economic and cultural potential and fully capture the benefits of diversity and that Auckland's organisations, whether large or small, all have an important role to play in supporting diversity.

The Auckland Museum have submitted that the Moana Pacifica dimension could be strengthened in the Auckland Plan especially with consideration of central government priorities in this regard. Auckland is a diverse and dynamic Pacific city and Auckland Museum is a place to hear and experience Pacific languages and cultures through participation of Pacific communities in our Museum activities and programmes. These are supported by their workforce with Pacific knowledge and language capability. There is potential for this capability

[4] With regard to Auckland Plan, each BID will be responding as necessary to its own local issues regarding the Auckand Plan.

to be strengthened across the Auckland Cultural sector as a valuable point of difference for the region of benefit to locals and visitors alike.

OUTCOME: MĀORI IDENTITY AND WELLBEING

You have tabled that Auckland's Māori identity is its unique point of difference in the world. This identity can be built on and grown through a number of approaches. Auckland's Māori history and presence must be woven throughout Auckland's fabric - the design of our places and spaces.
Showcasing and sharing Māori history, stories, and arts creates opportunities for all Aucklanders and visitors to learn about, experience and embrace Auckland's vibrant Māori culture.
Sharing these stories could continue to focus on key gateways into Auckland and through Māori public art, local events and digital story telling.
Māori must play a central role in crafting and sharing these stories.
Māori values and traditional knowledge, combined with contemporary Māori design, art and culture offer a unique and authentic means to design our built environment. They enable Māori to see themselves reflected in their city, and foster a sense of Māori identity and pride in all Aucklanders.

And that businesses have the opportunity to embrace Auckland's Māori identity, and through collaboration with Māori, can attract visitors and investment and showcase Auckland to the rest of the world. This sets Auckland apart from other international cities.

- We would like to confirm that in our exploration of the Reinvigorate Parnell project and the subsequent development of the PBA Strategic Framework, we identified a unique opportunity to collate and implement ideas for innovative wayfinding that brings together the objectives of connecting the various precincts in Parnell and to use this as one of the ways to engage with interested Mana Whenua incorporating storytelling of the multifaceted history of Parnell and celebrating New Zealand's point of difference in the world

- Within the framework of assessing potential upgrades to our parks, we also plan to incorporate any opportunities to address kaitiakitanga, environmental issues, and enhancing the environment for generations to come.

- These ideas are being tabled as part of our participation with the creation of the Parnell Local Area Plan.

OUTCOME: HOMES AND PLACES

You have documented that Auckland's population will increase significantly over the next 30 years and its urban form will continue to develop and change as a result.
That Auckland will follow a quality compact urban form approach to growth, in order to realise the environmental, social and economic benefits and opportunities this approach brings.
Some of the benefits of this approach are that it allows opportunities for more intensive living and working environments, and for more housing to be built around hubs of activity and close to good transport options.

And that

Well-designed public places and spaces are an integral part of urban living and offer respite from the pressures of daily life.

Since the use of public places continues to evolve in ways that are difficult to predict, it is important that they are designed to be multi-functional in use, and adaptable in the future. They also need to be welcoming to all, with inclusive design and architecture.
In your approach to urban place-making, a number of concepts, such as 'life between buildings' and 'human scale', are helpful guides to achieving the results you need.

You have then noted that investment must be specifically targeted at those areas that undergo significant growth and where population densities are increasing, and that efforts could therefore focus on restructuring streets and other public land into new public places and spaces that support housing intensification and centre development, and provide safe environments for the people who use them

Parnell is perfectly located on the fringe of Auckland's CBD and as such a prime candidate to manifest all these aspirations. As Parnell continues to develop and intensify, the need for additional transport options as well as well designed public places comes to the fore.

The development of the Parnell Local Area plan should contextualise many of these desired outcomes.

OUTCOME: TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

You have correctly identified that the legacy of past decisions is still felt today and many projects that were first planned decades ago, such as the City Rail Link, are only now being built. This makes it difficult to address today's problems, let alone prepare ourselves for future growth.
We agree that as a consequence, people living in large parts of Auckland still don't have many choices in the way they travel. Major chokepoints and bottlenecks also remain on many main roads.

We understand that The New Zealand Transport Agency, Auckland Transport and KiwiRail are the main planning and delivery agencies that will develop and improve the Auckland transport network to achieve the Auckland Plan.

The efficient movement of goods and services is essential to prosperity. The Ports of Auckland and Auckland Airport are New Zealand's main international gateways, so Auckland has a significant role in the distribution of freight within Auckland, to neighbouring regions as well as to the rest of New Zealand.

You have noted that Auckland Council and central government reached broad agreement on a long-term strategic approach to developing Auckland's transport system through the Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP). The agreed approach is then converted into action through the three-yearly Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), which sets out the optimal timing and sequencing of projects given available funding. ***However none of these project plans are available at the time of consultation.***

We are also aware the future of the sea port on the city centre's waterfront is being considered. You have added that any future change in location is likely to fall outside the timeframe of this plan; if any concrete decisions are made they will be reflected in the plan at a later stage.

Business absolutely needs efficient ways for people, goods and services to move within and across Auckland, throughout New Zealand and across the world. The vast bulk of freight and commercial travel in Auckland is by medium and small size vehicles distributing goods to

retailers or to homes, and by service workers such as plumbers or electricians. Travel delays and uncertainty about trip times create real and substantial costs to businesses. This increases costs for everyone.
As an example several businesses (especially in industrial areas such as Highbrook and Albany) are reporting they cannot guarantee deliveries past 2pm.

In the current material and available detail on the maps, there is no indication of Parnell benefitting from any road transport improvements on either the 'strategic public transport plan' or the 'strategic road network plan'.
On the map 'Transport and access – inter regional connections', there is no indication of rail freight directly from the Port of Auckland.

Being asked to comment in the absence of the revised ATAP and RLTP at hand and without the certainly of the future of Ports of Auckland is like commenting in a vacuum, as Parnell continues to be at the mercy of excessive traffic from Ports of Auckland.

- Parnell is forcibly bordered by The Ports of Auckland and a dysfunctional motorway owned by NZTA, creating access issues to Carlaw Park and psychologically cutting us off from the city.
- Whatever the future of Ports of Auckland, it is unlikely the footprint will lessen in the immediate future and the impact of the traffic along The Strand is already way in excess of desirable proportions.
- The Strand is unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists as well as other vehicles and essential discussions and plans around intersections such as Gladstone/The Strand are impeded as a result of the parties involved.
- NZTA, Auckland Transport and KiwiRail need to urgently address both short and long term solutions for this short stretch of road and should the port remain it is essential that that plan to underground SH16 from Stanley Street be brought forward as it is inappropriate that this initiative has been put on the 20-year (or longer) horizon.

We also support the view of Auckland Museum to promote easy accessibility to Auckland Cultural attractions for visitors.
Enhancements need to be made to public and active transport and intuitive wayfinding to support access for all Aucklanders to these valuable assets. In addition, they have submitted that more focus could be made of digital access in the Auckland Plan, particularly if physical access is a barrier.

OUTCOME: ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

You have noted that Aucklanders need to preserve, protect and care for the natural environment as our shared cultural heritage, for its intrinsic value and for the benefit of present and future generations.

Under the heading 'About Environment and cultural heritage' you refer to the natural environment as the basis for our existence, supporting and enabling all aspects of our society, economy and culture.

Under the heading 'Our cultural heritage', the natural environment as part of Auckland's shared cultural heritage, clarifying that this term is often used to describe that which we have inherited from past generations and are looking after for the benefit of future generations.
And further, that in this plan, the term is used to mean our collective heritage of: air, land, and water, biodiversity, significant landscapes and historic land features.

Why not the inclusion of built heritage as well? While we strongly support enhancing and protecting the environment, our major concern as Auckland's first suburb with significant heritage status, that there is no reference to built heritage in this outcome as part of our cultural heritage, but rather the key focus is on only natural heritage.

Parnell has a proud collection of **Category A** (places of exceptional overall significance to the Auckland region or greater geographic area), **Category B** – (places of considerable overall significance to a locality or greater geographic area) and **Conservation Area** – a concentration of places that, as a group, have at least considerable overall significance to a locality or greater geographic area.

It is not sufficient to say that most protection for heritage is in the Unitary Plan as it removes the role of 'stewardship' in the shared cultural heritage as well as influencing other outcomes such as 'Belonging and Participation' and 'People and Places'. Community organisations such as Parnell Heritage are essential in the preservation of our cultural heritage and should be included.

Arguably one of the most iconic places of both built heritage and significant cultural heritage is Auckland Museum and The Domain – both in Parnell.

We support the view of Auckland Museum that a world-class city needs a joined-up world-class cultural sector. We support increased collaboration of the cultural sector to enhance 'Belonging and Participation' and 'An Inclusive Auckland'. Auckland Museum is leading a programme of work to drive cultural collaboration across Auckland. This work is designed to improve outcomes and value for money for Aucklanders and visitors to the city.
Initiatives include joint marketing and ticketing, learning and engagement activities, shared services and a single Auckland wide digital collection.

Auckland Museum also has valuable Natural Sciences collections and research capabilities which could be better leveraged by the Auckland region. Supported by extensive digital tools, their unique combination of assets has the power to transform understanding of the world in which we live, enabling interrogation of the relationships between human culture and the natural world. As leaders in this space, the Museum could play a far more significant role in the city's environmental aspirations, particularly around how the city grows and makes sustainable choices for the future.

OUTCOME: OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY

You have tabled that innovation and entrepreneurship will be essential elements for increasing employment and raising wages. This will strengthen Auckland's economy in a globally competitive environment, and allow the economy to meet the needs of our growing population.
Innovation is a means of lifting productivity and future economic prosperity through creating new jobs, even as existing ones disappear.

Premises in Parnell saw the inception of two great Kiwi success stories – Rocket Lab and LanzaTech and today is the proud home to incubators such as The Callaghan Foundation, Level Two, The Ice House as well as co working spaces such as BizDojo and The Commons. We support any investment in innovation and entrepreneurship, believing that innovative business practices and technological advances can create the economy of the future and competitive entrepreneurial activity can drive economic progress.

DRAFT AUCKLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT AND MINIMISATION PLAN 2018

The Auckland Waste Management and Minimisation Plan has been reviewed and you are seeking feedback on proposals to: work with the commercial sector to find ways to reduce and divert waste from landfill; prioritise the three largest waste items - construction and demolition, plastic and organic waste; continue to establish community recycling centres; and to ask central government to introduce a container deposit scheme for plastic/glass bottles and cans and a product stewardship scheme for hard to dispose products like tyres and e-waste.

We agree that the priority must be the three largest waste items - construction and demolition, plastic and organic waste. We ask that Council pay particular attention to the nature and frequency of its collections in business areas as one way of addressing these waste streams. We support Council continuing to establish community recycling centres and leading by example through its own operations and procurement practices.[5]

We support the introduction of domestic kerbside collection of food scraps and ask council to work with business as soon as possible to reduce commercial organic waste, especially in town centres with high hospitality footprints.

We also support Council asking central government to introduce a container deposit scheme for plastic/glass bottles and cans, and product stewardship schemes for hard to dispose products like tyres and e-waste. We also support Council asking central government for an increase in the Waste Levy beyond $10 per tonne provided the revenue is 'ringfenced' to provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure waste is diverted from landfills and that any increase is phased in over a well signalled time period.

LOCAL BOARD PRIORITIES (WAITEMATĀ LOCAL BOARD)

We support the following priorities for the 2018/2019 budget:

- At Heard Park in Parnell you plan to upgrade onsite facilities to provide a more usable space for recreation and events.
- Restore Waiparuru, Waipapa and Newmarket Streams in collaboration with residents, community groups and iwi.
- Continue to improve our transport network by using our Transport Capital Fund to deliver safe and high amenity walking and cycling options, such as the connection from Newmarket to Parnell through the old Parnell rail tunnel, as set out in the Waitematā Greenways Plan 2013, streetscape improvements and slow traffic zones in residential areas.

We are also thankful for the support of the Local Board for the creation of a Local Area Plan for Parnell – which has commenced. We envisage this plan will realise several of our long held ambitions for Parnell and provide a long term plan to address connectivity.
However, we are mindful that plan of this sort take years to realise and in the meantime, there are still several urgent priorities that need addressing.

[5] For example, by using recycled demolition concrete in its own works.

You have asked how we think you should prioritise your Auckland Transport capex fund over the next three years?

- We support the use of these funds towards improved walking and cycling infrastructure though completing greenways routes, such as the connection from Newmarket to Parnell through the old Parnell rail tunnel

As well as

- Streetscape improvements such as St Georges Bay Road. Auckland Transport have noted that the upgrade of St Georges Bay Road is no longer a priority in their plan.
  However, over the past 3-4 years (including current developments taking place), the landowners in St Georges Bay Road will have invested over $100 million into that street alone and by the time the Manson's development is completed there will be around 2,000 people working in the immediate area (with very limited access to Public Transport).
  Auckland Transport have already presented a site analysis and indicated there is a budget for maintenance/renewals.
  This project cannot wait until the precinct plan is realised.

Advocacy requirements

1. Previously the WLB committed to ensure Parnell Train Station is open and operational to full services at the earliest opportunity. However, we notice that there is still **NO mention of the Parnell Station** in your WLB priorities draft document and ask for this to be put back on your agenda as a priority.

- We are very happy the Carlaw Park pathway has commenced.
- The link to the Domain needs to be enhanced, as does signage – this is urgent.
- Accessible pedestrian links from the station up to Parnell Town Centre are also an urgent need and we request the WLB advocate for Auckland Transport to fast track the creation of decent footpaths in the short term and plan appropriate pedestrian links for the future.
- We need your support in advocating for the destination appeal of Parnell Station and all the various initiative that will lead to this outcome.

2. We have noted that there is still **no mention of the impact of traffic from Ports of Auckland** and suggest that the WLB have an important and essential advocacy role to play in this regard.

- We are previously noted our dysfunctional motorway and subsequent owned access issues to Carlaw Park and the CBD.
- While the future of the port is still under discussion, unsafe conditions prevail.
- We again re-iterate that we would like the WLB to take a strong advocacy position with the NZTA, in order to co-ordinate short-term issues and to fight for a long-term solution (such as undergrounding the final section of the motorway to the Port). It is inappropriate that this initiative has been put on the 20-year horizon and needs to be brought forward as previously stated.

APPENDIX 1

Further feedback on general rates

Following the recent Council revaluations, several commercial properties have experienced a steep increase in Capital Value, **with the overall increase in Parnell of 46.8%.**

For some property owners, the rise in value has mainly been driven by purchasers accepting lower yields, rather than as a result of rental increases. The yields on commercial property tend to track interest rate movements as an equivalent investment class and with most economists agreeing that we have seen the bottom of the interest rate cycle, and now predicting increasing interest rates are on the way, we can expect to see yields increase and a corresponding decrease in value.

At the peak of the property market cycle, as they are at the moment, substantial council rate increases provide a windfall for Council. General variances based on current rate proposals range between a 46% increase to a 15% decrease, in net lease situations, this increase gets passed on to tenants through an increase in their outgoings. Landowners with gross rental leases or vacant buildings have to absorb these high increased costs.

Certain Parnell property owners who also have other properties across the city have calculated the proposed increases across their portfolio, reporting an average overall increase in excess of 6% **(and in some cases an average in Parnell in excess of 11%).** This is well above inflation and the 2.5% estimate cap provided by Council and is not sustainable for either tenants or property owners.

As mentioned previously our overall feedback is that what businesses need most from Council is a reasonable, transparent and stable approach to rates. This type of volatility is very difficult to budget for and can have a large impact on business.

While the Interim Transport Levy has been removed from the core rates equation, the transport funding is still an additional cost to business.
The targeted Rate in the Dollar for the Parnell BID has reduced by 40% which is not evident in the current online calculator.

Location	Type	Size (m2)	Was	Now (based on lower environmental rate)	Variance	Comment
Parnell Road	Retail/hospo	1,060	$30,294.00	$34,479.00	14%	improved property
Parnell	Commercial	3,846	$60,351.00	$97,926.00	62%	improved property
Parnell	Commercial	40	$4,649.00	$4,859.00	5%	old property
Parnell	Commercial/Retail	6,985	$244,579.00	$264,492.00	8%	improved property
Parnell	Commercial	1,444	$24,003.00	$36,733.00	53%	improved property
Parnell	Commercial/Retail/		$167,265.00	$171,115.00	2%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell Road	Commercial/Retail	837	$69,190.00	$67,873.00	-2%	old property
Parnell	Warehouse/offices		$129,846.00	$158,055.00	22%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Warehouse/offices		$125,328.00	$146,169.00	17%	limited improvements
Parnell Road	Commercial/Retail	773	$73,151.00	$75,754.00	4%	big jump in capital value, limited effect in rates
Parnell	Office	877	$16,945.00	$22,497.00	33%	no improvements since 2014

Parnell	Warehouse/Auto	579	$14,016.00	$15,694.00	12%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Warehouse/Aut0	599	$14,724.00	$16,984.00	15%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Office		$19,285.00	$22,147.00	15%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Office	314	$8,197.00	$10,962.00	34%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Retail	652	$38,551.00	$48,819.00	27%	improved property
Parnell	Commercial	1,006	$20,503.00	$24,854.00	21%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Parking	392	$9,787.00	$12,173.00	24%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell Road	Commercial	330	$11,657.00	$14,403.00	24%	limited improvements
Parnell Road	Commercial/Retail	422	$69,096.00	$76,732.00	11%	improved property
Parnell	Office	713	$15,825.00	$18,992.00	20%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell Road	Commercial	919	$9,691.00	$10,245.00	6%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell Road	Commercial/Retail	372	$185,383.00	$172,494.00	-7%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell Road	Retail	637	$15,275.00	$26,162.00	71%	no improvements since 2014
Parnell	Commercial	1,514	$34,128.00	$49,294.00	44%	no improvements since 2014

In Revolt

Reflecting over the past year, Hamish Firth decides, after due consideration, that he's had about enough of living under Auckland Council, and it's time to take matters into our own hands

I have decided once and for all, the bureaucracy that is Auckland Council is essentially incompetent, and we should secede from the Super City and become the Borough of Mt Hobson. Not because the Auckland 'regionwide' concept is not a good one, not because we are concerned about rates, but because the Council is generally incompetent and it becomes more and more apparent as time goes by. In short, we are not getting value for money, and less so as we each pay more than twice the average rate of an Auckland region dwelling.

Let me start local, and work myself to a crescendo at regional level. At the end of my street is a large grassy park. It has been mown by the incumbent council on regular intervals since the Scarborough's sold off the homestead to the city. Not any more. At the time of writing, the grass was knee high and has not been mowed since who knows when. Having walked through these meadows, I have paused to wonder why. Was it too wet? No. Had it been too wet? No. Had someone forgotten? Probably not. Have services been cut back and rates increased? Yes.

But I thought deeper, and realised there must be a more cunning plan than decay by neglect. And there it was right in front of me! Council has decided to increase revenue by growing hay. Hay they will harvest and sell to the horsey folk in Karaka. Genius, and how silly of me to doubt their abilities!

I am sure the Council communications team will tell us it's about biological diversity. That appropriate consultation was undertaken, but all I can hear is Cat Stevens singing; "Where will the children play?" In the greater scheme, the grass is a small issue, but symbolic of the level of service we are now seeing and why there is such a low opinion of the Council and their delivery of services. Really, how hard is it to mow a park on a regular basis? Of all the core services, which is more visible if not attended to? "Cut back services and increase costs" could be the new Council motto.

Next on my list in the Council family is Auckland Transport. I go to top up my Hop card and the website tells me it can take 72 hours for the money to register on the card. 72 hours! Did Auckland Transport sign up this system when now-convicted former managers were in charge, or did the French company who put in the system see a fool coming from a mile away? When I top up my TAB account, they confirm and update my account in seconds. I contacted good friends in London, who said as long as they top up their version of Hop, the Oyster card, by 11.30pm, it will be there by 4.30am the next morning. I have the Auckland Transport excuse ready: "I was not here when that policy was put in place."

Really, Auckland Transport, you purchased an outdated system with our money and the best you can do is make us wait up to 72 hours before the money registers. Where does it go in the interim. as it sure isn't in my account? It's 2017, not 1977. We are not waiting for the cheque to clear.

I am just getting warmed up, ladies and gentleman.

Recently it was made public that there has been a big rise in Council of salaries $200,000-plus, and that over 2300 of the 11,800 greater Council staff earn over $100,000. Mike Lee, our local Waitematā ward councillor, summed this up neatly when he said: "Council senior staff have always been diligent in budgeting very generous pay increases for themselves".

Let's put aside the figures for a moment and abide by the notion that to get good staff, you must pay them well. What I want is productivity (output) and accountability (fixing things as soon as they go wrong). Try and get a Council officer to return your email or phone call. At my planning consultancy, we have resorted to cc'ing managers after four days of no response from staff. Stand by the doors at 3.58pm, and there is a stampede of human flesh clocking out for the day. I sometimes wonder if they ever clock in.

There's a sign at the front counter of the planning department at Council: "Abuse will not be tolerated." While the sign is right, and the front of house staff are doing the best they can to direct the traffic, it is only human nature to be angry with incompetence that occurs behind the scenes – if your building consent is three months late and they've lost the paperwork for the second time (true story), then you are not going to be whistling "Dixie", are you?

Last month there was a mea culpa from Council on building consent processing. Council acknowledged there was an issue and things were taking too long. Really, you tell us now? Here is what they don't tell you:

1) When you "lodge" your building consent it sits in an admin pile until someone can register it.
2) Once this is done it is checked for completeness – a good process, but this can take up to 10 days after you have dropped it off.
3) Once it makes it into the system, it usually sits for another 15 days before someone responds to you. But all the departments involved do not do this at once. They do it one after the other, which means if it goes on hold the first time someone needs something – like more information – from you, you may not become aware of the additional requirements for 10 further days.
4) You finally add the required information – which will be different depending on the officer you get – and then it goes to admin for processing. Add another week for this at least.

So Council describes one thing, and the customer experience is entirely different. You know there is more juice to this. Council said there was an issue with staff leaving, but they had a cunning plan to solve this problem. "Interns and graduates have been brought in to make up for the staffing shortfall". Ahhhhh – now that's a solution. Untrained and inexperienced labour will fix the problem. Shoot me now.

Remember "Consenting Made Easy"? You may have heard of this now-failed project, launched by Council some four years ago. They acknowledged that consenting could be better, and embarked on seconding staff to have a talk and action fest. I got to provide critical comment. Council staff were surprised when I said that I felt absolute relief when we finally got approvals. I said

Alice Ewan-Fitzgerald and dog Molly navigate Little Rangitoto Park before Council's contractors apologised, and started the mowers again. Photo by Mary Fitzgerald

their concept was great in theory, but would be let down because the wrong staff were in place. And guess what? The Consenting Made Easy project has been quietly dropped. Consenting Made Hard continues.

Wrong people, in the wrong place. On RNZ National recently, a sheep breeder said he has stopped trying to eliminate foot rot by treating individual sheep. Rather, he stops breeding from those sheep. Council could take a cue from him, and cull the management sheep with foot rot. It would result in a better flock.

Admittedly, Council is often up against it. They cannot win either way – too much consultation or not enough. To combat this. they employ communications staff – 234 at a cost of $45m per year, to make sure the messages to us are clear.

In the real world, look at Fletcher Building. With ongoing issues, the CEO left with immediate effect, as did many of the senior management team. They didn't walk the plank after one bad announcement or even two, but after three, changes were made.

Would that ever happen at Auckland Council? It never has and probably never will. And we pay for it every day.

It feels like the private sector, and you and me the ratepayers, are from Mars, and Auckland Council is from Venus. Such is the difference in approach and delivery. It is time to shine the spotlight on all of these issues (and I am sure you have more) in the strongest way possible. I think many of us see problems or issues as an opportunity to grow or change; to get positive growth out of a negative situation. Alas, that does not appear to be the case within Council.

I must caveat this with noting there are good people who work hard at Council. One is Rob Abbott, who recently stepped down as the manager of liquor licencing. Rob communicated with the industry, updating us on changes to policy in a clear and concise way. I sent him an email on his last day thanking him for guiding us through the legislative change and providing sound management and guidance. He came back and appreciated my comments but advised that he got little praise in his job. Classic. Council do not praise those doing a good job, nor correct those doing a sub-par job. As such, the good ones leave and the less than satisfactory know it is a place to get away with doing a sub-standard job, and no one really cares.

We are coming to an end, the wine bottle is low and the clock is high. As mentioned earlier, each of us pays twice the average rate for a similar dwelling in the Auckland region. So if we broke away from the current Council beast and halved our rates, we would get the same service as we get now. Just think of the level of service we would get if we left the rates the same!

To celebrate the new borough's conception, I envisage our first mayor to be Desley Simpson, our esteemed Ōrakei ward councillor. The CEO would be housing strategist Leonie Freeman. Google her credentials and check her solution to the housing crisis (thehomepage.nz). Her name will be synonymous with the housing crisis solution in 10 years' time. You read it here first – but if only the politicians will get on board to what is a great idea.

The Borough of Mt Hobson may not be the best name, but it is a marker. Next year we will have our first vote on what the name of our new entity should be.

Think about it as you enjoy food, family and a bit of down time this summer. ■