
REPORT 10
(1215/52/IM)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE – REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

This paper is a report back on the Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) Conference 2007.

2. Executive Summary

The Mayor and Chair of the Tawa Community Board, Ngaire Best, accompanied by officers, attended the LGNZ Conference in Dunedin, from 15 - 18 July 2007. The theme of the Conference was *Investing in our Future*, reflecting the work local government does to ensure communities are vibrant places, and the funding issues facing local government.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

4. Discussion

Through a combination of keynote addresses, break out sessions and workshop sessions, the conference explored a number of topics under the theme of *Investing in our Future*. Topics covered at the conference included:

- sustainability
- building heritage into our future
- councils in the digital age
- recent announced reforms of the transport sector
- climate change
- assessing improvements in community well-being
- the local government Rating Inquiry.

The Annual General meeting (AGM) of LGNZ was held on the last day of the Conference.

Points of interest to note from the Conference include:

- the Chair of Local Government New Zealand, Basil Morrison, emphasised the point that councils are increasingly concerned that they do not have the resources, or the funding, to undertake all the functions devolved to them by Government, and to meet the expectations of their communities, and that the sector was looking to the Rating Inquiry to set out a path forward in terms of support for a broader range of funding tools, and how central government could contribute more.
- the Minister of Local Government emphasised that:
 - the Government sees the country's infrastructure as a critical factor in furthering New Zealand's economic transformation, as demonstrated by recent transport funding decisions for the Auckland and Wellington regions
 - by focusing collaboratively on local government funding, the two arms of government can better service community needs, and have a clearer picture of how to best invest in a sustainable future
 - Government was committed to supporting regional initiatives where councils have come together to address a common issue or goal (e.g. the Wellington Regional Strategy), and was working to identify how it could better support such clustering arrangements.
- the Leader of the Opposition stated that he wanted to see a shared basis on which to make sound infrastructure investment decisions, with a consistent approach between the central and local government sectors. He supported use of a broader range of tools, possibly involving increased use of partnerships, charging arrangements and longer-term financing. He also advocated local government reform in Auckland.
- the then Minister for the Environment stated that the Government was proposing a new and comprehensive product stewardship framework for dealing with waste streams, and was committed to introducing a waste levy regime on waste to landfill to invest further in waste minimisation infrastructure.
- Sir Michael Lyons, author of a recent UK report into the roles and funding of local government, highlighted the similar issues UK local government was facing when compared with NZ local government (e.g. the gap between community expectations and ratepayers' willingness to pay). He noted that one thing local government can do is to contribute to "growing the size of the cake" by taking regional economic development seriously. He talked about

place shaping – the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community - and emphasised three factors:

- maintaining the cohesiveness of the community by ensuring all voices are heard
- understanding needs and preferences, and making sure the right services are provided
- playing the role of convenor across all public services.

In the place-shaping model, the key leadership challenges are to:

- anticipate future challenges and opportunities
- build coalitions and look outside community boundaries for knowledge and collaboration
- communicate effectively and build trust
- be open with information and ensure transparency
- demonstrate a deep understanding of local issues
- look outward rather than upward – focus on service performance for its impact on the community.

In his concluding remarks, Sir Michael noted that:

- communities should have the freedom to make decisions for themselves (a move away from common standards)
 - local government needs to argue the value of difference
 - there is a need for a grown up debate about what we want and what we are willing to pay for
 - there needs to be a clear understanding of how central and local government fit together.
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- Sherri Torjman, Vice-President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, gave a keynote address on building strong and healthy communities. She, too, emphasised the importance of the Mayor and Council acting as convenor of government and other agencies to address community issues.

5. Annual General Meeting

LGNZ held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Conference. Points of interest to note from the AGM were:

- LGNZ would again develop a sector manifesto, prior to the 2008 central government election campaign, with the aim of influencing the policy positions taken by parties contesting the election.
- the AGM debated and supported remits relating to:
 - building accreditation
 - leaky homes settlement
 - climate change
 - National Council financial recognition
 - Boy racer legislation
 - New sanitary works subsidy scheme

- Sanitary works subsidy scheme funding.

Further information on the remits, and on the conference itself, is available on the LGNZ website – www.lgnz.co.nz.

6. Conclusion

The LGNZ Conference was a valuable opportunity to hear about the challenges and opportunities facing the local government sector, and to share ideas and best practice.

Mayor Kerry Prendergast

Supporting Information
<p>1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome <i>This project supports Outcome 7.2.B – More actively engaged: Wellington will operate an open and honest decision making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.</i></p>
<p>2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact <i>The project relates to C534: Elections, Governance and Democratic Process.</i></p>
<p>3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations <i>Not applicable</i></p>
<p>4) Decision-Making <i>This report does not seek a decision</i></p>
<p>5) Consultation a) General Consultation <i>Not applicable</i></p> <p>b) Consultation with Maori <i>Not applicable</i></p>
<p>6) Legal Implications <i>Not applicable.</i></p>
<p>7) Consistency with existing policy <i>Not applicable</i></p>