

**Whangarei District Council Finance and Support Committee meeting
- 23rd March 2011**

Today's Finance meeting started at 0900hrs with Cr Warwick Syers in the chair.

There was an apology received for Mayor Morris Cutforth. *Well I think that was what was mumbled as it's sometimes hard to hear some of the speakers clearly.*

Cr Syers also mentioned the passing of Maureen Johansen who had been a valued employee at WDC in the revenue department. Councillor Christie arrived at 0901hrs. A welcome was also made to a new Financial Controller, Matt ???? *sorry couldn't hear his surname.*

Item No.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were received and there was no need for discussion at 0902hrs.

Item No.2. Minutes of Community Funding Subcommittee were received.

Cr Shelley Deeming believed a correction was necessary as Cr Aaron Edwards was at the meeting but noted in the minutes as 'Present' and should have been 'In Attendance'. *Good old mother hen, looking after the new councilor.*

Cr Kahu Sutherland queried about a declined application asking where they were from. Owen Thomas, Senior Community Services Advisor stated they were a national organization, with Kahu asking 'where from'? And advised by Owen 'Auckland' *Seems to be an answer Kahu was happy about.*

At 0904hrs it was Item No.3. Financial Report for the eight months ending 28 February 2011 and as Cr Syers says 'My friend on my left Alan Adcock can explain' *One thing about the military training, Warwick, it teaches right from left. What about right from wrong? We were advised it was similar to the previous couple of months. On page 10 the Environmental Services revenue was down due to downturn in building. There was projected a \$150million debt at year end. Yes you heard right \$150m debt, only \$1875-00 for every man women and child in the district and they don't think it is an issue. A clarification in regards to arrears was that it was about \$100,000-00 higher than last year. A large outstanding in regulatory application by a large developer, Hoppers was not an issue and was being chased up.*

Cr Brian McLachlan queried if other income was property sales (on page 7)

Cr Merv Williams highlighted media coverage in regards to a Local Government funding agreement. Alan Adcock agreed it was putting pressure on banks.

Cr Greg Martin had concerns (page 9) regarding outstanding rates.

Alan Adcock felt some can't pay, some wait till last day of financial year to pay, it was a similar profile to other years dependant on market conditions. They had 10,000 ratepayers on direct debit and having a good success with that.

Cr Sue Glen queried if it was constantly the same people.

Alan Adcock claimed there were some problems with Maori land but it varies being a combination of things.

At 0912hrs we have a brief diversion and Alan Adcock runs a power point presentation, "WDC debt as at 30th June 2010".

A good presentation Alan made in an attempt to enable more people to understand the accounts that have previously been presented in varying formats.

In his normal condescending manner, Syers comments at the end, to Wayne Deeming 'hoping the presentation had been helpful'

NB Wayne has written many letters questioning councils frivolous spending, so it appears to have triggered at least a conscience.

Item No.4. Delegated Authority - Financial at 0924hrs has Cr Greg Martin concerned about giving authority down to the lower levels and didn't have the training and experience. He also queried if these were all signed off by senior staff. *Interesting question Greg, it appears that its senior managers that spend well outside budgets. Don't you remember the McKinlay Douglas report 'blowout'?*

Alan Adcock reassured a requisition is produced before an invoice is raised. It tracks through the computer system progressing all the way through and must be within the budget and finance team

Cr Brian McLachlan needed assurance requesting 'if these people had a budget?'

This was confirmed by Alan Adcock 'Yes, they do'

Item No.5.at 0926hrs 2011/2012 Annual Operating Grants.

Cr Brian McLachlan was pleased Whangarei CAB is receiving a grant and is fully supportive of that.

Cr Merv Williams endorses Brian's comments and his comments are echoed over this whole band of funding, adding that without this the costs to council would be higher. The community benefit from CAB was many times greater than the cost of the grant.

Cr Sharon Morgan was pleased that all the organisations were tracking well to our requirements and this funding was certainty for their future and a plus.

Cr Sutherland reminded of a workshop recently and youth was a focus. He didn't feel youth really focused in these grants and even the mayor (*was he there?*) had asked for more funding for youth groups.

Mr Adcock advised they were in discussion with at least 3 youth groups at present.

Chair Syers stated community funding grants were available and they were very conscious that youth groups made application. There were good mechanisms in place for them to apply.

Cr Morgan mentioned that some of these groups appear to have no youth but they do and named a few that did in fact contain youth.

Now onto Item No. 6 Support Services Group - Report on Recent Activity.

Cr John Williamson said it was good to see the report in here.

Cr Phil Halse had a query regarding (page 30) 116%. He thought you could only get to 100%. *OK Phil we know we can only get up to 100% out of you, that's why some are possibly giving 130% and others only 25%. Did I say that, Sorry Austin.*

Mr Adcock put him right explaining the rent returns were more than they were spending on pensioner housing.

Cr Warwick Syers mentioned that they must look at performance measures making them attainable.

Cr Sue Glen was happy people were able to speak to a person at customer services and made a statement, *that many forget*, 'we are their servants'.

The air was filled with Cr Sutherland's cell phone ringing. It was going again. *Kahu that's what the glass of water is for, just dunk it, they do it on TV, it quietens them well.*

We are getting through this well. Its 0936hrs and Item No. 7 CEO's Office - Report on Recent Activity.

Cr Warwick Syers claims it's good to get all this information.

Cr John Williamson had a query (page 38) regarding Visitors programme.

Chief Operating Officer Jude Thompson, to her feet, explains it is to do with the 'World Cup.' *What else could it be John? Remember the World Cup is the saviour for Whangarei. It's going to make us all wealthy and repay our debt including the debt on the stadium that was forced upon us.*

Cr Merv Williams, as quick as, "asks could there be a cost benefit analysis at some point"

Cr Glen, referring to page 37, believed from previous decisions the word 'retaining' was missing in the item.

All done and dusted, the meeting was over by 0938hours. It was outside for a quick break readying oneself for the next round at 1000hrs.

All information in regards to this meeting's agenda and others are available on the Whangarei District Council website by clicking on this [link](#).

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