

Thursday, 9 May 2024

Te Hui o Te Kaunihera ā-Rohe o Heretaunga

Hastings District Council

Performance and Monitoring Committee Meeting

Kaupapataka

Attachment – Volume 1

Te Rā Hui:
Meeting date: **Thursday, 9 May 2024**

Te Wā:
Time: **9.30am**

Te Wāhi:
Venue: **Council Chamber
Ground Floor
Civic Administration Building
Lyndon Road East
Hastings**

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5.	BUILDING UNIT REVIEW, APRIL 2024	
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JIM PALMER CONSULTING

Item 5

Building Unit Review

Jim Palmer

April 2024

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Hastings District Council requested an independent review of its Building Unit. The terms of reference for the review are to provide independent assurance to the Council regarding the activity and provide a continuous improvement plan.

For the purposes of this review the term Building Unit refers collectively to the two units that undertake Building functions of the Council - the Building Consent Unit and the Building Recovery & Compliance Unit that are each headed by a manager.

The review was undertaken in February and March 2024, with the grateful support of the Building Unit Managers from Selwyn and Waimakariri District Councils, Vanessa Mitchell and Warren Taylor respectively, who formed part of the three-day on-site review team, and they also reviewed my draft report.

The review included interviewing 24 customers of the Unit, attending a Council workshop, holding discussions with three elected members, the Council's Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, as well as the Group Manager Planning and Regulation and Managers and Team Leaders within the Building Unit. I also attended the March Building Industry Advisory Group meeting and spoke separately to some of its members. I greatly appreciated the generous way they all gave their time.

1.2 Overall Conclusions

The Building Unit is considered a 'good' Building Consent Authority (BCA) in terms of its systems and procedures, and its compliance with technical standards set by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and assessed by the national accreditation agency - International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ). In doing so, in my view, it has resulted in the Unit being overly focused on compliance, with pragmatism, risk, and a focus on customers not featuring as predominantly as they should.

A reset of the national framework is required that rebalances the risk and compliance focus of the building sector regulators. The Building Amendment Act 2012 intended, among other things, to introduce a risk-based consenting framework. However, the sections of the Act that enabled this were never made operative. MBIE has commenced a review of these provisions, which is long overdue. I support the Council's recent endeavours to encourage the Government to amend its regulatory framework settings.

The management of its Territorial Local Authority (TLA) functions, such as assessing swimming pool barriers, Earthquake Prone Buildings and Building Warrants of Fitness is sound. It has also managed its role in the response and recovery to Cyclone Gabrielle very well.

A good team environment exists within the Unit and there is a commitment from its staff to do a good job. Along with others within the Council, they have had to contend with, and respond to the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle, the post-Covid building surge and now a significant contraction in building industry activity, which means that the environment for the Building Unit has been challenging.

Notwithstanding the challenging environment, for the Unit to be 'high performing' there is considerable opportunity for improvement. The Unit needs to morph from being a team focused on ensuring regulatory compliance to one that has a strong business focus with emphasis on:

- quality service delivery,

