A year of strong collaboration and improvement in Council services

Wellington is an outstanding small city. It offers an excellent lifestyle and a wide range of opportunities in a vibrant and dramatic environment.

The role of Wellington City Council is, in essence, an enabling one. We provide an environment in which residents can live, work, do business, enjoy their recreation and leisure time, and achieve their goals.

Much of our work, therefore, is about collaboration. It is about understanding our common goals and the individual aspirations of the people who live, and do business, here. It is about working with them to ensure the city’s foundations and environment supports them.

This has been a year of improvement in the ways the Council engages with residents. In the 2010 local body elections, voter turnout in Wellington increased for the first time in almost two decades – and the election process was exceptionally well run. There was also an increase, compared to previous years, in public submissions to the 2011-12 Annual Plan. Many were from people who have not taken the time to comment in the past. This can only be seen as a positive result.

I would like to thank all Council staff for their professionalism and dedication in helping to make this year another excellent one for the Council and the city.

Key projects

Key projects we completed or progressed during the year:

- Major Golden Mile transport improvements were completed with Manners Mall opened to buses, providing a quicker, more reliable and more coherent public transport route through the city centre.
- Continued improvements were made to the city’s sports facilities, including the addition of three artificial sportsfields and the opening, in August 2011, of the ASB Sports Centre at Kilbirnie. All of these facilities were finished in time to be used during RWC 2011.
- We completed a number of upgrades to ensure the city was locking its best for RWC 2011 and beyond. Key projects included landscaping and street improvements along Waterloo Quay adjacent to the Stadium, the refurbishment of Maidstone and Cobblestone Parks, and new public toilets.
- Te Raukura – Te Wharewaka o Poneke was completed and two new waka commissioned to be housed there. The first of these, the waka tekotekotekore, Tā Rangihoua, arrived in August 2011.
- A new approach to recycling was introduced. Covered wheeliebins and bags were introduced to improve our recycling service and new recycling contracts allow us to process all recycled material in New Zealand. The changes improve safety for recycling workers, and are more sustainable both financially and environmentally.
- We continued to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of our services. This included making more services available online, such as geospatial information and applications for property information. We also made changes that allowed faster processing of applications for property information.

We committed to the Government’s financial assistance package that aims to speed up resolution of leaky homes claims. The package sees half of the costs of the repairs met by property owners and the remainder split between the Government and councils.

Collaborations with TradeMe and CityLink allowed Wellington to offer free Wi-Fi on the waterfront from January 2011 and throughout the central business district from September 2011.

The $400 million upgrade of the Council’s social housing stock, in partnership with the Crown, reached a peak with redevelopment work under way at a number of major sites including Central Park, Newtown Park, Regent Park and Hanson Court.

Service performance

During the year, Council services generally met and in many cases, exceeded expectations. We monitor service performance closely through resident surveys and a range of other measures – all of which are independently audited for accuracy. A few of the highlights for this year are:

- 72% of residents surveyed believe Council services offer value for money.
- 77% of residents surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with the Council’s performance.

Financial performance

In another year of solid financial performance, the Council maintained an AA+ credit rating from Standard & Poor’s. Among New Zealand institutions, only the Crown has a higher credit rating.

The Council recorded a net surplus of $10 million during the year after adjusting for fair value movements and other non-cash items of income and expense, an underlying variance of $24.4 million was recorded. The main reason for this underlying variance is the inclusion of unreported leaky homes claims within the provision of income and expense, an underlying variance of -$24.4 million was recorded. The main reason for this underlying variance is the inclusion of unreported leaky homes claims within the provision for the first time.

A total of $177.4 million was spent on the city’s assets during the year.

Council borrowings increased during the year but overall debt remained well within prudent levels.