Most of the funding used to provide services such as roads, libraries and parks comes from rates. And a significant proportion – almost half – comes from businesses.

Supporting businesses, growing them, and attracting new ones to the city is therefore critical. If we do this well, we will see business growth, more economic activity, more quality jobs, more students staying in the city after their studies, and ultimately more money in the city to deliver high quality services.

One of the essential things we must do if we want to attract more businesses to the city is to become widely recognised as a place where it is easy and attractive to do business – a place where the Council is business-friendly, has a ‘can-do’ attitude, provides fast quality services, removes unnecessary ‘red tape’ and generally provides an environment where business can flourish.

Being ‘open for business’ means ensuring that essential transactions can be completed quickly and easily; regulatory requirements are clear, consistent and fairly applied; and the right information is readily available with unnecessary red tape minimised.

By making these improvements the Council’s services will support businesses to do what they do best – create jobs and invest back into their business. In addition, it will enable the Council to save money that could be diverted into shovel-ready investment in the city and region.

We have made a start. We are stimulating development by making it easier and cheaper to develop ‘Green Star’ rated buildings in the city; providing incentives for owners to strengthen quake-prone buildings; and we’re making some payment options more flexible. These changes aim to support quality buildings and reduce compliance costs.

To meet the needs of digitally connected customers, the Council is working hard on introducing online and digital services in many areas. We’re currently working on making property and district plan information, as well as building consent applications, easily available online so people can quickly and easily identify issues in relation to their properties. Other transactions traditionally done in hardcopy will follow. The overall purpose is to provide a more customer-centric service and minimise the time needed to carry out transactions with the Council.

We are also working to combine ‘back office’ functions with other councils and also to standardise IT – recognising that most people find local-authority boundaries irrelevant to their daily lives. This project will enable the Council to better deliver its core services and improve our customer service, reduce IT costs, increase our business efficiency and position ourselves for future changes to the way we work.

By being ‘open for business’ we will improve services, reduce costs and ‘red tape’, and make Wellington a more attractive and successful place to do business.

For more on the 8 Big Ideas, please visit our website.