

## **Speech notes for presentation to Governing Body**

Presented by Denise Bijoux, Monday, 27 March 2023

Kia ora koutou,

I am here in my capacity as a senior member of Inspiring Communities, a national organisation specialising in community-led development, and also as a local business owner and community leader.

Community-led Development does not mean that local residents or community organisations are sole decision makers. Rather, it is about a local systems approach where everyone has something to contribute as active partners. It champions effective engagement, participation, collaboration, trust. It builds social capital and resilience. And it's an understatement to say that continued investment in this type of community and social infrastructure by Auckland Council remains essential to the integrity of city building here in Tāmaki Makaurau.

You can read more about this in the background paper I sent late last week. For now though, I want to share what we have been hearing from community groups and organisations across Tāmaki Makaurau about the budget itself.

My team and I have facilitated several conversations about the proposed budget with 38 people involved in community groups and organisations across the city. All of these people, including myself, have serious misgivings about both the content of the budget and the philosophies, motives and values that underpin it.

These people say that, despite the Local Government Act obliging Auckland Council to be responsible for improving all four wellbeings - social, cultural, environmental and economic - this budget will not grow or sustain wellbeing in their areas.

While we can see the potential fiscal savings, there is no cost benefit analysis so what are the benefits of the proposed budget to the city and her people? And do they outweigh the costs? How do we know that these proposed cuts and reductions in services, these proposed increased fees and charges won't do more harm than good, and won't cost more than they are worth over time?

Those we have heard tell us the proposed budget brings little benefit to their communities. They say that cuts in the annual budget as proposed will have far reaching and long lasting ripple effects across population groups, places and through time. Not only that, these cuts will be irreversible in many areas and will undermine how well our city and the people in it flourish.

Massey Matters, a community organisation in the west, will for example, lose as much as 70% of its funding with only a matter of weeks to source alternative resources. Gribblehirst Community Hub in

Sandringham will see a tenfold increase in maintenance fees for its two leases from \$1000 to \$10000 a year. Mairangi Arts Centre, Glenfield Community Centre, Rakau Tautoko, COMET and many more community organisations and groups face uncertain futures.

People we listened to say that increased fees and charges will mean many services and initiatives disappear, particularly in the lower socio economic areas across the city and among community groups with fewer resources. Focus Area 6 of the Auckland Plan 2050 is to 'Focus investment to address disparities and serve communities of greatest need'. How is this budget doing that? How is it equitable, they ask?

How too does it deliver on Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and responsibilities as outlined in the Auckland Plan? Or mitigate and help the city adapt to climate change?

It is, in fact, very difficult to map this budget over the Auckland Plan 2050 and see how it helps achieve very many of the 6 Outcomes, various Directions or many Focus Areas at all. It is even more difficult to see the 5 underpinning values of atawhai (kindness and generosity), kotahi (strength in diversity), auaha (creativity and innovation), pono (integrity) and taonga tuku iho (future generations) in this budget.

So, what is the vision and strategic direction that this budget is aligned to?

Tāmaki Makaurau, ko koe me tō kotahi i te ao nei, nōku te

māringanui kia mōhio ki a koe,

kia miria e te kakara o te hau pūangi e kawē nei i ō rongo.

Ka whītiki nei au i taku hope ki ngā pepehā o onamata, ki ōku

tūmanako mō āpōpō

me ōku whakaritenga kua tutuki mō te rā nei.

Tāmaki Makaurau, tukuna tō wairua kia rere.

Despite my rough pronunciation, you may recognise this passage. It is the last part of the mihi that opens the Auckland Plan 2050.

Auckland you stand alone in the world, it is my privilege to know you,

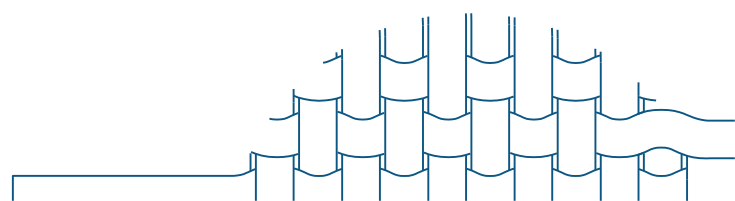
to be brushed by the gentle breeze that carries the fragrance of all that is you.

And so I gird myself with the promises of yesteryear, my hopes for tomorrow and my plans for today.

Auckland let your spirit soar.

To let Auckland's spirit soar we must change this budget.

Not only will the proposed cuts and increased fees and charges have many negative impacts on the wellbeing of local people, but they also mean that Council itself is less able to leverage external investment from central government, philanthropic funders and large businesses, and to enable people to do best for themselves, their communities and their places.



The Southern Initiative is just one example where Council resources have secured significant monies from central government, universities and businesses to better support and resource community partners who are already working with marginalised communities to increase and expand their capacity in ways that matter to them - to create employment and enterprise opportunities for South and West Aucklanders through its social procurement project - the envy of many other councils across the country. Yet, in this budget, it is to be cut. How does that make sense?

This budget seems to be, to those we have heard, a focus on cost rather than value for money and a trashing of not only the LGA2002 and the Auckland Plan and associated policies but also the Human Rights Act, The Auckland Council Governance Manual (especially with regard to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and co-governance), the Economic Development Action Plan, Thriving Communities, Age-friendly Auckland Action Plan, I Am Auckland and Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau plans and various publications from the Independent Māori Statutory Board.

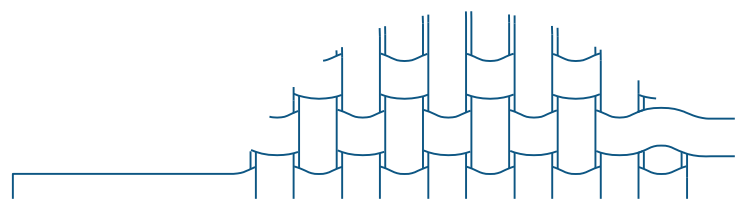
A thriving city where residents are able to live good lives in a range of ways is evidence of Council doing its job well, of you doing your jobs well. To achieve this, existing investment needs to be maintained and increased. Existing connections need to be sustained and deepened so that trust and relationships grow which will lead to new opportunities for partnership.

This proposed budget does none of this. It undermines trust and relationship and is, as one group put it, a “kick in the teeth” for those who have “put in the hard yards following Covid, plus floods and storms to address community need”. Those who have developed and manage facilities and amenities feel similarly undervalued and wary. They say this proposed budget means that Council facilities will be underutilised, that is Council-owned capital will be increasingly vacant. Is this a way, the people we have listened to ask, to make an argument to sell facilities off as is proposed for the airport shares? Is there more to this budget than meets the eye? They don’t trust or believe that there is nothing to be done about the “financial weather” of the “black hole” of \$290Million except cut services, increase charges and fees, and sell airport shares.

Instead, they say, this is the time to build local resilience, to invest in community and social infrastructure - physical and natural structures as well as the kinds of programming that grows connection and belonging, trust and relationship. So the city is strong as a whole, more than the sum of its parts and that the various physical and natural structures are well maintained, utilised, respected and fit for purpose. Because the wellbeing of each of us, and of the place itself, is only secure when the wellbeing of all of us is strong. And because the future is more uncertain than ever and the places of first response to change (both abrupt change and incremental change) are in and with our communities and in how well our different communities are networked together.

And many of you know this already, I know. Because you talk about it in various media. Several of you talked about how residents banded together after the Anniversary Weekend floods, for example, and how infrastructure investment, such as Te Auanga and the Awataha Stream projects, has been so successful not only at managing high volumes of water but also at growing social connection and social capital. Others have talked about the value of local initiatives such as food provision and local procurement - that local contractors can provide better services than city-wide contractors because they are local.

Many of you are very much aware of the value, albeit it is often unaccounted for, of local social and community infrastructure of all kinds. And Inspiring Communities’ deep experience working with



local government from all over the country shows how Auckland Council is in a unique position to foster this networking, this resilience and this adaptation. Because Council operates at a number of collective levels - Auckland region, Wards, Local Boards and neighbourhoods - and because it has relationships with a large number of other investors, such as central government, large firms and various population groups. Investment in community and social infrastructure across the city is essential to enable good lives across Tāmaki Makaurau for everyone, every day.

So, I say to you that this is not the time to be reducing spending or increasing charges. This is the time to be investing in community infrastructure through LDIs and ABS, regional grants, contracts and investment in facilities and amenities to

- ensure a diverse range of high quality everyday life for residents across the region;
- prepare for, respond to and recover from crises, emergencies and disasters;
- mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- support strong local economies and flourishing natural environments;
- ensure more equity and leverage existing strengths
- deliver on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the LGA2002, the Auckland Plan and the many other policies, strategies and plans that align to both of these

I urge you to read the background document I sent and to explore the Better Budget for Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland so you can significantly amend the proposed budget.

There is opportunity here, right now, to work together to optimise outcomes for people in all parts of the city.

Among community groups and organisations, there is an appetite for increased borrowing, especially to invest in future wellbeing; for increasing property rates; for sustaining targeted rates to mitigate climate change (potentially adding more targeted rates); to share resources and equipment more; and to make locally-led solutions easier to implement.

With a little innovation, we can work together to sustain and improve the quality of life in Tāmaki Makaurau in ways that work really well for all the people here, and which treat community like the asset that it is.

He taura whiri kotahi mai ano te kopunga tai no i te pu au.

From the source to the mouth of the sea, all things are joined together as one.

Nga mihi nui

