

Governance framework review: Waiheke pilot project

Purpose

1. This paper outlines the proposed approach to a pilot project with the Waiheke Local Board and community that tests a more devolved approach to developing local solutions across a range of issues

Background

1. The pilot is an outcome of the governance framework review, initiated by Auckland Council in 2016. One of the key themes of the review was that local boards do not feel sufficiently empowered to fulfil their role as envisioned in the governance reforms.
2. It also noted some local frustrations in relation to transport decision-making, especially in relation to local boards carrying out their role as place shapers at the local level.
3. The review also considered whether it would be feasible for some local board areas to have differential decision making powers depending on the extent of the regional impact of specific local decisions. It suggested that, as a case study or pilot, this could be implemented on Waiheke given:
 - the more clearly defined community of interest on the island (relative to most other local board areas)
 - the separation of the island from the wider Auckland network with respect to services such as roading, stormwater or public transport
 - the desires of the local board for greater decision-making autonomy, and a feeling that the regionalisation of services across Auckland has failed to reflect the unique nature of the island.
4. As an island, Waiheke's communities of interest are easier to describe and define. Their assets and facilities are mostly local by definition, and they are generally not connected to the rest of the region in a network sense.
5. In addition, the local board has consistently sought greater autonomy, arguing that this would deliver better outcomes for the community, and better reflect the principles of subsidiarity and the policy intent of the Auckland amalgamation.

Proposed approach

6. The attached proposal outlines the proposed governance and project structure for the pilot project. It proposes that the pilot run for a three year period from 1 October 2017 and that it be formally evaluated to determine to what extent it has been successful and whether any or all of its activities could be transferable to other local boards.

7. The proposal sets out a draft “intervention logic” that links how the various activities proposed will be resourced, how they will link to the outcomes sought and how they will be measured. This is set out in more detail in the section on the evaluation.
8. The bulk of the proposal sets out the proposed areas of work in the pilot project. The project is based on the following principles identified at the previous workshop with the local board being:
 - subsidiarity - the principle of decisions being made closest to those affected;
 - local flexibility, speed and responsiveness;
 - development of the notion of a resilient community; and
 - recognition of the role of volunteer work in contributing to a strong community.
9. These principles have guided the proposed scope, which includes a range of operational, policy and community issues, which have been drawn from priority areas identified by the local board over time. Specific examples have been identified in the proposal for two reasons:
 - The case study approach enables easy identification of achievable goals, and therefore the ability to measure success in achieving those goals.
 - The approach will enable testing of collaborative ways of working locally under local leadership that may be transferable to other local board areas.
10. Where there are voluntary agencies already involved in, or leading work, the project will work alongside those agencies with the community.

Implementation

11. The proposal will be considered by the political working party on 21 June 2017. The working party will form a view as to whether to recommend that the pilot proceed and that recommendation will be considered by the governing body in August. There will be a further business meeting with the board seeking formal feedback on the review as a whole before the governing body meeting.
12. Implementation planning is at its early stage and will require close involvement with existing local staff, as well as the board.

Evaluation

13. The final section of the proposal outlines the proposed evaluation process at a high level. The purpose of the evaluation is to:
 - document the changes associated with the pilot, in terms of the nature and extent of the board’s decision making power, and the organisational support provided by Auckland Council and CCOs
 - identify areas for improvement and any ‘course corrections’ as the pilot progresses

- measure and report on the outcomes and impacts resulting from the pilot
- provide recommendations relating to the continuation of pilot initiatives within the Waiheke Local Board area following the conclusion of the pilot, as well as roll-out to other local board areas across the region.

14. The outcome of the evaluation will be reported towards the end of the pilot, with recommendations as to whether to continue, modify and/or expand the approaches that have been tested.

Feedback from workshop

15. The project team is looking for feedback from the local board at the workshop on 15 June that will help refine the proposal ahead of the 21 June political working party meeting. Issues to consider would include:

- Does the board support the principles set out in the proposal?
- Do you think the focus on specific projects and deliverables work for the board and the community?
- Are the areas of focus an accurate representation of the board's priorities? Are there other areas that need to be included?
- Do you have any questions about how the evaluation process will work?
- What changes would you like to see in the proposal?