
Governance Framework Review work programme - Implementation Update

Te take mō te pūrongo

Purpose of the report

1. To provide a progress update on the implementation of the Governance Framework Review (GFR) work programme.

Whakarāpopototanga matua

Executive summary

2. Following the first meeting of this term's Joint Governance Working Party (JGWP) in March, meetings scheduled to take place in May and June were cancelled.
3. COVID-19 and related emergency budget proceedings have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on both the overall GFR programme and its individual projects.
4. Of 18 projects that have been undertaken as part of the GFR work programme, outputs have been delivered for 12, five remain in progress, and a sixth project is on hold. Progress updates for each live project are provided below.
5. A key piece of work that remains outstanding is the overall evaluation of the GFR work programme. Evaluation of the work programme will play a critical role in informing future work in response to the GFR but has also been delayed by COVID-19.
6. The GFR implementation programme going forward will need to be aligned with any implementation programme that arises from this year's CCO review.

Ngā tūtohunga

Recommendations

That the Joint Governance Working Party:

- a) note the update on the GFR work programme implementation.

Implementation Update

7. The JGWP established for this term met for the first time on 10 March 2020. An overview of the programme was provided alongside a status update for each project.
8. At the March 2020 meeting of the JGWP, staff indicated that the following items would be brought back to a subsequent meeting:
 - An update on the annual work programme (including known policy, plan and bylaw projects) and outcomes from the joint Governing Body/local board chairs meeting planned for 16 March. This meeting was subsequently cancelled.
 - An options discussion paper for both the Minimum Service Levels and Equity of Service Levels and funding phases.
 - A report on issues around movement of local assets between service and non-service (and vice versa) as part of the divestment process. Staff undertook to report back to the JGWP on how the political recommendations have been factored into operational processes.

- A discussion paper proposing a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives that have been implemented as part of the GFR work programme which will inform future work in response to the GFR.
9. On 20 March, Auckland Council announced it would close pools, recreation centres and major venues to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and on 21 March, COVID-19 Alert Level 2 came into force, followed by Alert Level 4 on 26 March.
10. While many of Auckland Council's governance meetings were able to be held over Skype, a decision was made to cancel the JGWP meetings scheduled for May and June given the extraordinary volume of work created by both the COVID response itself and the emergency budget process that followed.
11. The lockdown and subsequent emergency budget have had a significant impact on matters within the scope of the GFR, including:
- Heightened urgency and the need for prudence led to decisions being taken by staff on matters of finance and health and safety, under the Chief Executive's delegations, that would normally be more consultative
 - Constrained budgets and staff resourcing may impact delivery of GFR projects
 - Challenges related to new business processes, for example, more rigorous approval process for recruitment, may lead to delays
 - Elected members must be kept abreast of internal restructuring, so that they know who to contact
 - Reopening of facilities are subject to constraints of resources – both budget and staff.
12. Despite the many difficulties brought about by COVID-19, many positives have emerged as well, including:
- Greater opportunities for participation in proceedings via video conference technology, including developing opportunities for members of the public to participate
 - Increased access for the public to local board meetings through video recordings
 - Acknowledgement of the critical role of local boards in economic and community recovery, and ensuring they are empowered to undertake this role
 - Heightened urgency of decision-making led to decisions being taken at the newly-formed Emergency Committee.
13. The above points demonstrate that while the overall goals of the GFR are just as important now as they ever were – and perhaps even more so – repriorisation of work programmes to address the COVID-19 and emergency budget context means that some work may need to be undertaken on a longer time frame or approached in a more innovative way.
14. In addition to changes brought about by COVID-19 and the emergency budget, the GFR implementation programme will need to be aligned with any implementation programme that arises from the CCO review.

Evaluation

15. A key piece of work that remains outstanding is the overall evaluation of the GFR Work Programme. Evaluation of the programme will play a critical role in informing future work in response to the GFR.
16. Work has commenced on a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the initiatives that have been implemented under the GFR programme of work against its initial high-level goals:

- ensuring clear roles and responsibilities between the two arms of governance (understood by elected members, staff and the public) and that decision-making sits at the right level
 - continuing to support local boards to effectively fulfill their role as governors of a discrete set of local services and activities, especially in their place-shaping role
 - ensuring appropriate accountability and incentives for political decisions
 - ensuring local boards receive quality advice to support their decision-making role
 - supporting improved community engagement and improved services for Aucklanders.
17. Evaluation will provide feedback on the overall effectiveness of the 18 projects against their own objectives, as well as the contribution that each of these projects has made to the goals of the overall programme.
18. Unfortunately, evaluation, like many other council endeavours, has been delayed due to COVID-19, for a number of reasons:
- the deferral of the 2020 elected member survey, which was planned for August 2020 but has now been delayed to June 2021, subject to resourcing. This would have been a significant source of data and feedback regarding the outcomes of the GFR work programme up to now.
 - The difficulty of collecting quality data in relation to improvements made in GFR focus areas, when the organisation is not operating in a “business as usual” environment. For example: measuring whether Auckland Transport have been able to provide a more strategic and structured approach to developing projects funded by the Local Board Transport Capital Fund (LBTCF) will be difficult with changes to the fund necessitated by the Emergency Budget.
19. Staff will now look to share a more detailed plan for evaluation in early 2021.

Ongoing projects

20. Of 18 projects that have been undertaken as part of the GFR work programme, outputs have been delivered for 12, five remain in progress, and a sixth project is on hold. Updates for each live project are provided below under three workstreams – policy, funding and finance, and organisational support. All projects for the fourth workstream (governance and representation) have been completed.

Policy workstream

21. There are two projects still in progress under this workstream:

Initiative	Progress Update
<p>Improving the process of local board involvement in regional policy</p> <p><i>Purpose: To ensure effective local board involvement in regional policy decisions.</i></p>	<p>Progress has been made on increasing staff understanding of the new process and appropriate engagement with local boards.</p> <p>The inaugural Governing Body / local board chairs work programme meeting was planned for 16 March and had to be cancelled. Work on this will be picked up once there is more certainty around departmental work.</p> <p>Impacts on regional policy and strategy will be worked through as budget implications become clearer. Regional policy and strategy that is progressing will take account of the agreed processes.</p>

Initiative	Progress Update
<p>Waiheke Island pilot of enhanced local governance</p> <p><i>Purpose: To trial/ test proposals for devolved decision-making on Waiheke and assess whether these ideas could be applied across other local board areas.</i></p>	<p>Minimal impact from COVID-19.</p> <p>Waiheke Local Board’s OLI (the Mātiatia transport hub) now on hold.</p> <p>Three-year pilot formally ends on 30 September. The Programme Manager will continue with key projects that still need leadership after that date.</p> <p>RIMU to undertake “post pilot” formal evaluation to support pre- and mid-pilot evaluations. This will outline findings and options for wider application of learnings. Once this is available, Programme Manager will formally report to Waiheke Local Board and that report can be included on the next agenda for JWGP.</p>

Funding and finance workstream

22. There is one project still in progress under this workstream:

Initiative	Progress Update
<p>More flexibility of decision-making over operational funding and service levels</p> <p><i>Purpose: Increased flexibility in the use of operational funding for local activities. This work is being completed four workstreams: (i) Stocktake of existing service levels (ii) minimum service levels (iii) service level equity and (iv) organisational impact</i></p>	<p>Additional options for funding allocation were developed during February/March.</p> <p>Further delays to final options resulted from disruption under Levels 4 and 3, and further impacted as the focus of decision makers shifted to the emergency response and emergency budget.</p> <p>Revision to engagement plan underway, including alternative engagement approaches for project content.</p> <p>Updated proposals to be presented at the JGWP meeting of 25 August.</p>

Organisational support workstream

23. There are three projects still in progress under this workstream:

Initiative	Progress Update
<p>Governance fundamentals</p> <p><i>Purpose: To lift awareness and understanding of the shared governance framework to support improved quality of advice</i></p>	<p>The final three scheduled workshops (approximately 75 staff) were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The contract role supporting the programme was terminated due to budget restrictions. The training will now be developed using Quality Advice Programme resources.</p> <p>The immediate priority is to develop and deliver core, online modules (foundational for any staff with political engagement)</p>

	<p>by the end of 2020. No further workshops, in their current form, are planned.</p> <p>The development and delivery of optional and advanced modules (aimed at staff with high political engagement) has now been deferred to 2021. These modules may be a mix of online and face to face workshop options.</p>
<p>More consistent local board democracy support</p> <p><i>Purpose: Improve consistency in the democracy processes followed to support local boards, to make it easier for staff attending 21 local board workshops or business meetings</i></p>	<p>Since March, the focus has been on supporting the implementation of new legislation which enabled the recording and virtual attendance of local board business meetings. This was necessary to ensure openness, transparency and public access during COVID19 alert levels three and four.</p> <p>Local Board Services Department (LBSD) staff are now undertaking a programme of work aimed at harnessing the benefits experienced by staff and elected members from working remotely and meeting virtually through the lockdown including reduced commuting, financial pressures and work-life balance stresses, along with a smaller carbon footprint. Recommendations will be made to local boards on future work practices whilst ensuring that the appropriate support, technology, and training is available to both staff and elected members to ensure the success of these ways of working.</p> <p>The Consistency in Action (CIA) project has delivered consistent processes and templates to support staff across the organisation who engage with local boards via workshops. A staff survey was conducted in November 2019. Results indicated that the initiatives put in place through the CIA project have been successful in creating consistency and improving the workshop experience and the overall experience of working with LBS staff and local boards. We will carry out staff surveys on a periodic basis to continue to identify areas requiring improvement.</p> <p>The LBSD continuous improvements programme is now shifting focus in response to the new organisational strategy and LBS Business Plan priorities. All projects will now be approached through the lens of consistency, innovation and collaboration, whilst balancing efficiency with the value of local flavour.</p> <p>As a result, we recommend that the CIA project is wound up in favour of consistent processes being progressed through the ongoing LBS continuous improvements programme. This would mean that this project is no longer monitored and reported on as part of the GFR.</p>
<p>Improve capacity to support local board policy advice needs</p> <p><i>Purpose: Improve capacity to support local board policy advice needs</i></p>	<p>On hold</p> <p>This project is on hold while the 'local board involvement in regional policy' work is progressed to allow for learnings and to minimize the risk of duplication.</p>

Governance Division Restructure

24. Effective 5 September 2020, the following changes will take place within the Governance Division:

- a new operating model for Local Board Services Department that replaces Relationship Manager roles with Local Area Managers
- the creation of a new Governance Services Department
- the creation of a new Democracy and Engagement Department.
- The reporting line for John Nash, Programme Manager Waiheke and Gulf Islands, moves from the Governance Director to the Central Teams Manager, Local Board Services

25. Changes made within the Governance Division at this time do not preclude further restructuring decisions from being made by the council's Transition Unit later in the year, with the goal of creating a leaner, more efficient, and adaptable organisation.

Ngā koringa ā-muri

Next steps

26. Staff will now look to share a more detailed plan for programme evaluation in early 2021.

27. The immediate priority is to ensure that ongoing GFR projects are able to be agile and flexible, adopting to the new context, and supported to deliver as much as is achievable within the new constraints.

Ngā kaihaina

Signatories

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