



23 May 2021

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Tēnā koe Clare

Invercargill City Council Legacy Report

Thank you for your letter of 12 May 2022 in which you forwarded the Invercargill City Council's (the Council's) Legacy Report (the Report) to the Department of Internal Affairs (the Department).

When the Department wrote to the Council on 18 August 2020, we highlighted concerns raised through media articles and correspondence regarding significant conflict among the Council's elected representatives and the Chief Executive. In that letter we asked for assurance and evidence that the Council was taking proactive steps to restore trust and confidence in its ability to meet the Crown's expectations of a high-performing Council, pursuant to Part 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

The Legacy Report provides a comprehensive summary of the Council's journey over the last 20 months to address the Department's concerns. The establishment of a clear and simple strategy with a plan that set out achievable and measurable targets was critical to the success of this project. Having reviewed the Report, I am satisfied that the Council now has a set of foundational documents, tools and processes to enable it to continue the journey towards being a high performing organisation.

I would like to acknowledge the courage and willingness of elected representatives and the Chief Executive to identify behaviours and actions that were not consistent with good governance and performance. This internal reflection provided the platform for the two External Advisors to give the necessary support to keep the project moving and deliver the results.

I note, however, that public confidence in the Council is still very low. The Council should continue to focus on turning around this sentiment and I support the idea of repeating the questions in the Resident's Survey to measure improvement over time. Embedding the learnings into processes and behaviours over the next triennium will demonstrate to the community that the Council is effectively managed and governed. One key to restoring community trust and confidence will be maintaining a proactive communications strategy to support effective governance and management.

In accordance with the Act, I am required to advise the Minister of Local Government, Hon Nanaia Mahuta, on her ministerial powers of assistance and intervention in relation to the performance of local authorities. In this respect, I am satisfied that the Council has sufficiently addressed the matters that were detracting it from giving effect to the purpose of local government, and that the issues identified in the Department's August 2020 letter have been appropriately managed.

As the report acknowledges, there remain some residual challenges. It is imperative that these are not forgotten, and that the Council commits to applying the strategies and practices that are now in place. It will be especially important after the October 2022 elections to ensure that the new council carries forward the learnings from this experience. I expect to see ongoing and focussed effort from management and elected representatives – each doing their individual roles well while jointly supporting their collective responsibilities. Neither can succeed on their own.

Finally, I offer my congratulations to all those involved in the project for delivering successful outcomes in a relatively brief timeframe and at a lower than expected cost to ratepayers. I am confident that the Council's efforts will serve as a road map for other councils who are dealing with internal dysfunction and conflict.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Ward', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish. A small black dot is positioned to the right of the signature.

Richard Ward

General Manager Policy and Operations

Te Tari Taiwhenua | Department of Internal Affairs

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