

REPORT

TO: Councillors

FROM: Mayor R Kempthorne

DATE: 4 March 2009

REPORT REF: RCN090305 MAYORS REPORT (3)

SUBJECT: Standing Committees - Membership

Background

On Saturday 14 February there was an opinion piece written in the Nelson Mail (p.8).

An opinion was expressed that Councillors may be overcommitted and unable to cope with good practice in governance. Two reasons were given “that Council cannot currently do its governance job adequately”.

1. Council is a Unitary Authority and has many functions to fulfil “which means it has two jobs – that of a Territorial Authority; and that of a Regional Council” resulting in “a colossal workload, and subcommittees and hearing have to be included as well.”
2. Councillors are all members of each standing committee resulting in overwork. “Overload appears inevitable and means potential for inefficiencies, wrong decisions and significant absences of councillor from their wards.” Council could, as was previous practice, delegate to fewer Councillors (i.e. seven Councillors per Standing Committee) the decision making of each committee.

My opinion is that the Unitary model suits our district very well. It combines the function of both Territorial Authority and Regional Council. It is a very efficient and effective way for local government decision making in our community. While it does create more work for individual Councillors and Mayor, it is my preferred choice of Council structure for our district and I commend those who originally thought of this concept and implemented it.

With regard to having all Councillors on all standing committees, you may recall that Tasman District Council used to have certain Councillors delegated to each standing committee. Once it came to Annual Plan and LTCCP discussions, many of the decisions that had been decided during the year and which had financial implications for the new Annual Plan were debated again, a very inefficient process. It was then that we decided on a change, with all Councillors

on all standing committees. While it does create a slightly increased workload on Councillors during the year it makes a more efficient Annual Plan or LTCCP decision making process.

My understanding is that many other councils take a similar or the same approach. All their Councillors are involved at the committee level and the committees (just like ours) have considerable delegated powers. The committee does it once and does it properly with the Full Council only having a confirming role.

I would like to raise the question as to whether Councillors wish to change the makeup of standing committees.

Recommendation;

That Council confirms that all Councillors remain members of each standing committee.