

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



**Minutes of a Meeting of Council**  
**held at Deer Stalkers Hall, Wairere Drive, Hamilton.**  
**Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2025 commencing at 11.00am**

**PRESENT:**

**Chairman:** G. Annan  
**Councillor's present in person:** S. Smith, M. Barker, E. Williamson, O. Kent, P. Del., T. Clarke,  
A. Sapich, A. Brown  
**Staff:** D. Klee, D. Lelievre, A. Daniel  
**Members of the Public:** P. Hardy (DOC representative)

**1. APOLOGIES:**

G. Dickey, N Juby, D. Cocks, B. Jarvis-Child, It was moved;

**that apologies be accepted.**

**Smith/Williamson– CARRIED**

**2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:**

Nil.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE 26<sup>th</sup> July 2025:**

It was moved;

**that the minutes of the previous meetings of the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2025 be accepted as true and correct records.**

**Dell/Smith– CARRIED**

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

Council noted that there had been positive feedback on the region's access initiatives, particularly the mapping project led by Mr Jarvis-Child. Councillor Williamson suggested that staff prepare a short YouTube video to highlight the new functionality and features of the mapping system.

## **5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:**

### **5.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report**

**Shoveler Counts:** Councillor Smith noted that there appeared to be large numbers of shoveler around parts of the Kopuatai. The Chief Executive advised that good numbers had also been counted around Whangamarino, where favourable water levels coincided with this year's count.

**Lake Arapuni Spawning Surveys:** The Chair requested an update on this year's surveys. Mr Daniel reported that results were similar to last year, with approximately one third of the fish identified as hatchery origin.

Councillor Sapich joined the meeting at 11.15am

### **Infringement System**

The Chief Executive advised that a further document had been provided by NZC for regional consultation; however, this was received after the agenda for the meeting had been finalised and sent to Councillors. The Chief Executive confirmed that a reply had been sent to Richie Cosgrove to ensure NZC was still operating on the basis of a two-meeting cycle timeframe for regional councils to provide feedback. The consultation document will be included in the next agenda.

### **Bethels Wetland Rates**

Councillor Barker noted that Council is paying rates on the wetland and questioned whether rates relief may be available. The Chief Executive advised that enquiries had been made following the successful application for remission on the Stone Jug Road property and confirmed he would follow this up again, as no response had yet been received.

## **6. 2025/2026 BUDGET AND OWP CONFIRMATION**

Council discussed the updated 2025/26 Budget and Operational Work Plan. Concerns were raised about the ongoing low level of general reserves, with forecasts showing reserves falling below the 20% threshold by 2026 despite recent budget reductions. Members noted that levy payments had redirected savings away from reserves and highlighted the risk of cashflow pressures given the timing of licence income.

Council agreed to approve the updated Budget and OWP, and requested that the Chief Executive write to NZC seeking clarification of the levy structure, a reduction in levy payments, and deferral of payments until after the game bird season.

7. It was moved;

***That Council approve the 2025/26 Operational Work Plan and Budget, and that the Chief Executive write to NZC highlighting concerns regarding Council's low reserve levels, negative equity, and the issues outlined in the Chief Executive's report to Council. Further, it was resolved that Council seek an adjustment to levies to ensure it is not reliant on restricted reserves for cashflow.***

**Brown/Williamson – CARRIED**

#### **8. OUTGOING COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:**

**Letters to Minister Meager and NZC Governance Advisor Graeme Nahkies:** Letters to Minister Meager and to NZC Governance Advisor Graeme Nahkies were added to the agenda for inclusion in the public record. It was noted that the letters had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting and that Council's approval had been confirmed by email resolution before they were sent.

#### **INCOMING COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:**

**Letter of Response from Graeme Nahkies:** Council discussed its contents and noted disagreement with some of the assertions contained within. Councillor Williamson provided an overview of the discussions at the NZC meeting that related to the letter.

It was moved;

**That the incoming correspondence be accepted.**

**Brown/Williamson – CARRIED**

#### **9. CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL REPORTING**

Council discussed the consultation document, noting that it may be difficult for all regions to provide the metrics requested. Councillors observed that the proposed quarterly reporting timeframes appeared onerous and that the proposal could duplicate existing annual regional reporting requirements. It was suggested that the document be further workshopped with regional managers to ensure the metrics sought are available. Councillor Barker noted that some of the proposed metrics were not informative and provided little context for licence holders. Councillors agreed that the CAR should be outcome-focused to provide maximum relevance and clarity.

It was moved;

**That the CE provides feedback to NZC requesting the CAR document is further workshopped at the upcoming managers meeting and remains outcomes focused to provide maximum context for licence holders.**

**Brown/Williamson – CARRIED**

The meeting broke for lunch at 12.30pm and reconvened at 1.08pm

## 10. GENERAL BUISNESS

### DOC AERIAL SURVEY WORK

Councillor Barker expressed concern regarding the helicopter work conducted by the Department of Conservation (DOC) during the duck shooting season. He questioned whether the month of May could be excluded from such operations in future. The Chief Executive advised that staff had been consulted on the proposed operation and had requested that the activity be delayed until after the season, however, this did not occur.

It was moved:

***That the Chief Executive writes to the DOC Area Manager seeking to ensure that helicopter operations are avoided during the dabbling duck season in Whangamarino.***

***Barker/Williamson – CARRIED***

### GAME REGULATION REVIEW

The upcoming tri-annual game regulation review was discussed. The CE explained that remits were currently being considered and that staff were drafting the report for Council. Councillor Clarke noted that licence holders had been in touch with him regarding some of the existing regulations, particularly around pond feeding. The CE advised that any proposed changes should be submitted through the formal remit process to ensure they are properly considered within the national review framework.

### AUSTRALASIAN TAXIDERMY CHAMPIONSHIP

The Chair noted that the Australasian Taxidermy Championships were being held in Taupō and mentioned that any Councillors who were in the area may wish to visit the exhibits.

## 11. OSH REPORT

The Chief Executive provided an update on the ongoing work he and Ms Lelievre were undertaking to improve the Health and Safety Plan and associated systems. He advised that National Chief Operating Officer Richie Cosgrove has a further meeting scheduled with the 'Get Home Safe' providers. As Council is aware, the Chief Executive has been advocating for a national single enterprise account for Fish & Game that regions can opt into. Council agreed that this approach appeared to be a more efficient method, enabling improved consistency and shared learning between regions.

The Chief Executive also summarised the previous Health and Safety (OSH) report, noting that there had been no notifiable incidents or injuries since the last meeting. Routine maintenance and site inspections had been completed across all managed wetlands, with

minor corrective actions undertaken. Staff training records had been updated, with refresher training scheduled for first aid and chainsaw certification later in the year. The Health and Safety hazard and incident registers were reviewed and updated to reflect recent field operations, and the monthly Health and Safety calendar continues to be used to track training, audits, and equipment checks.

It was moved;

**that the OSH report for September 2025 is accepted.**

**Dell/Barker – CARRIED**

## **12. NZC UPDATE**

Councillor Williamson provided an update on recent New Zealand Council meetings he had attended. He explained the rationale for re-appointing Corina Jordan as Interim Chief Executive while Fish & Game continues to navigate the reform process.

Councillor Williamson also expressed ongoing concerns regarding the New Zealand Council's financial systems and budgeting practices. In his view, there remains a lack of financial oversight and limited clarity around how funds are being allocated and expended by the NZC and the national office

### **PUBLIC EXCLUDED MOTION**

It was moved;

That the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, pursuant to the provisions of Section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, on the grounds below.

**Grounds Under LGOIMA:** Section 7(2)(a) (to protect the privacy of natural persons, including staff), and Section 7(2)(f)(i) (to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between members or officers). Section 7(2)(c)(ii) (to avoid prejudice to measures protecting the health or safety of members of the public), and Section 7(2)(f)(i) (to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between members or officers).

**Annan/Barker – CARRIED**

It was moved;

**The following motion, formulated in the public-excluded session, be adopted in open meeting:**

**That the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council resolves to:**

Instruct the Chief Executive to obtain an independent legal opinion regarding:

- The legal status and validity of current employment contracts;
- The extent to which the Council may delegate employment functions to the Chief Executive under the Conservation Act 1987; and
- The circumstances, if any, under which it is appropriate for Council to seek access to individual employment agreements, and the legal responsibilities of councillors for maintaining staff privacy and confidentiality; and delegation framework, and employment arrangements.
- Any associated implications for the Council's governance, delegation framework, and employment arrangements.

Request that the legal opinion be provided to the Council Chair and circulated to all councillors once received.

Note that this action is intended to provide clarity and assurance to both councillors and staff, and to ensure that the Council's employment practices remain consistent with current legislation while the reform process proceeds to formalise and codify current practice.

**Smith/Barker – CARRIED**

The meeting closed at 2.38pm