



## **Local Lobbyists Plea: Commissioners Not Councillors**

**TAURANGA, 8 November 2021:** Tauranga’s Urban Task Force (UTF) are pleading with Local Government Minister, Nanaia Mahuta, to keep the city’s Commissioners for a further term rather than allowing the election of another unfit local council in October 2022.

UTF Chairman Scott Adams says the group is concerned that the same group of ineffective ex-councillors that the Commissioners replaced could be re-elected at the Local Body Elections, and that much of the progress and improvements made in the city in recent months is at risk of being repealed.

“This group of ex-councillors have indicated that their strategy is to reverse the decisions made by the Commissioners and promote rates freezes across their 2022 to 2024 term.

“The Commissioners have done their best to reverse decades of poor governance resulting in chronic underinvestment, and much of that work would be undone if this group were elected,” he says.

The Commissioners Transition Strategy will see the four Commissioners step aside next year to make way for newly elected councillors. The UTF implored Mahuta to retain the Commissioners beyond October 2022, for a full three-year term.

“The next three years are critical for the city. Long term infrastructure projects such as the Te Papa Multi-Modal corridor are scheduled, as is the opening of land tracts for new housing developments.

“The work the Commissioners have started on regional co-operation is also essential. Mistrust between the three local councils, combined with a lack of relationship-building with central government, has resulted in New Zealand’s fifth largest and fastest growing city falling behind by some 15 – 20 years,” says Adams.

Appointed in February this year by Minister Mahuta to replace the city's elected officials after a period of significant dysfunction, the four Commissioners have been tasked with identifying and remedying issues facing the city in the short, medium and long term.

“The UTF commend Minister Mahuta on her decision to appoint Commissioners. Their mix of background experience, the level of community engagement and the progress they have quickly made, has been overwhelmingly positive for our city. We believe this view is echoed by the majority of Tauranga residents.

“Our members see a positive future for Tauranga, a thriving city poised to become the commercial, cultural, and civic heart of the Bay of Plenty. The right leadership is vital to achieving this and a return to the mismanagement, under-investment and toxic relationships that characterised previous councils,” says Adams.

“The commissioners are prepared to make the tough decisions. Unlike elected councillors, their reputation as professionals relies upon their performance in the role. They are more driven to leave a lasting, positive legacy and we're keen to support them in continuing that work.”

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#### About the Urban Task Force

The UTF is an incorporated society formed to provide powerful, knowledgeable leadership and the benefits of years of experience to Tauranga city's local authorities. Members comprise of some of the city's most influential developers, investors, professionals and iwi deeply concerned about the direction the city is taking.

For more information about the Urban Task Force see: <https://urbantaskforce.co.nz/>

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