Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire Responses

The Wellington Chamber of Commerce asked mayoral candidates* a series of questions to gather their thoughts on key aspects of Wellington’s governance for the upcoming term. Below are their responses, in their own words.

*We also sent a questionnaire to Johnny Overton, but he declined the opportunity to respond.
I've been proud to play a major role in Wellington's transformation over the last 20 years. Now I want to make our great city even better. Key issues for me are:

- Strong, strategic leadership;
- Greater financial discipline (budgetary taskforce including external expertise, spreading investment);
- Getting Wellington Moving (options out for consultation in Q1 2017, and decisions by year end);
- Providing housing and other needs of a growing city;
- Investing in the central city which is our economic engine and #1 residential growth area;
- Investing in lifestyle elements which attract talented people;
- Building stronger relationships with business.

More info on www.andyfoster.org.nz

Jo Coughlan

I want my six children to have the same wonderful career and life opportunities Wellington has given me. There is more to do. That's why I'm running for Mayor.

Our city will flourish if we prepare for the future now. We need to focus on the big projects: Attracting and retaining successful businesses; double tunnelling Mt Vic and The Terrace; building an iconic harbour cycleway for everyone to enjoy; protecting our native flora and fauna with practical environmentalism; reducing wasteful Council spending.

I will work to ensure we get our fair share of Government investment.

#GoJo

www.joformayor.co.nz
Facebook/jocoughlanformayor
twitter.com/joformayor

Andy Foster

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Jo Coughlan

As a development economist, I will carefully guard your interests in the way money is spent.

Today Wellington’s economy is strong—regardless of the proposed ‘Big Ideas’ spending programme that has led to increasing debt, a 5.4 percent rise in residential rates this year, and the unfair widening of the differential with commercial rates.

I commit to:

- Keeping residential rates rises below two percent [or the rate of inflation]
- Ditching the WCC’s $90 million commitment to the Airport Runway Extension
- Community co-designing road and mass transit projects
- Making affordable housing and social housing high priorities.

Wellington needs new leadership and new energy.

I’m experienced in bringing together a diverse team of people and uniting around a shared vision.

My objectives would be to invest in infrastructure like water storage. Engage the Government formally on an agreement to upgrade State Highway 1 between the Terrace Tunnel and the Airport. I strongly support the consent process to lengthen the runway.

The council’s job is to provide a strong backbone to grow investment and jobs and ensure that Wellington is liveable for a growing population.

Nick Leggett

Keith Johnson
2016 Mayoral Debate

Candidate bios—Their vision, in their own words

Helene Ritchie

Experience counts!

While other candidates may make their mark in future, Helene, Wellington’s first woman deputy mayor and longest serving councillor, is ready to be mayor, with a wealth of governance, leadership and advocacy experience, and significant city-wide achievements.

'The position of mayor, is one of the nation’s most politically challenging requiring wisdom not just billboards, silly promises and slush funds.

'Priorities: Economic summit; rates relief—no rates funded $350m–$500m runway extension; congestion relief; sound open democratic governance.

'Truly Independent not favouring political party, corporate or developer sponsors I’ll be answerable to all Wellingtonians, inject new energy, champion our Council and City with pride.'

Justin Lester

My priorities are:

1. Getting Wellington’s economy humming and creating jobs: I’ve grown my own successful business Kapai over 10 years and worked in executive management in the private sector. I’ll use that experience to grow Wellington.

2. Getting Wellington’s transport moving by freezing public transport fares and unblocking congestion at the Basin.

3. Ensuring Wellington builds homes that are warm, dry and affordable.

I’ve got the relevant business and Council experience as Deputy Mayor to work with Government to get things done.

Nicola Young

As Mayor I’ll freeze the rates at inflation.

I’ll protect core services by cutting waste—the sham consultations and vanity projects.

I’ll champion economic growth by working with tertiary education and digital sectors, and tackle Council’s expensive, time-consuming resource consent process.

Traffic congestion is damaging our ability to do business. State Highway 1 should be ‘cut-and-covered’ (like the Arras Tunnel) so it’s faster, and becomes the cross-town preferred route, along with the extra Terrace and Mt Vic tunnels Central Government wants to build. I oppose massive ratepayer subsidies for the runway extension and believe the project will be a white elephant.

I’m running for Mayor because I love Wellington and I know we can make it even better.

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I’ve got the relevant business and Council experience as Deputy Mayor to work with Government to get things done.
1. What is your vision for Wellington?

I see a very positive future for Wellington and I am looking forward to leading the city council to deliver to our potential. While we have done some good things, we need to do more. I want Wellington to be the most liveable successful city in NZ and to be recognised and attractive globally. We will be vibrant, inclusive, diverse and be an attractive place to live, work and invest. We will have the best infrastructure in NZ. We need four lanes (2 lanes each way) from SH1 and SH2 at Ngauranga through to Wellington Airport. This involves solving the Basin bottleneck and duplicating the Mt Vic and Terrace Tunnels. I want the most sustainable transport solutions for Wellington. Electric buses and electric cars will be a key part of my plans. I also want improved cycle infrastructure including a harbour side cycleway. Subject to a few things, I support a longer runway but want a fair allocation of costs and any support to be reflected in the value of our investment. We will be moving fast to become predator free. We will have more domestic and international students and we will be seen as NZ’s technology hub. Our culture will be enhanced by a new events centre and an upgraded civic square precinct. And we will have completed the proposed convention centre and movie museum. We will have excellent sporting and arts and events infrastructure and be a place where our children will want, and will be able to, build world class careers and have happy successful lives.

To be one of the best cities in the world to live, work and visit. We offer a fantastic lifestyle with easy access to a huge range of arts, culture and sporting activity, surrounded by restored nature and thriving wildlife with tracks enjoyed by walkers, runners, bikers. Our growing high wage economy is based on world class public sector, creative, IT, film, public and professional services, education and tourism sectors. We have a vibrant easily walkable downtown with entertainment and retail areas and strong, diverse suburban centres. We have easily the highest levels of walking, cycling and public transport ridership in New Zealand. Our people are friendly, welcoming, tolerant and engaged in a city they are immensely proud of. Our Council shows leadership, builds strong relationships with Government, business, education and communities. It demonstrates coherent long term planning, and manages city infrastructure really well.

Wellington’s people are its greatest asset, and its layout and compact form encourage collaboration—we need above all to build on these strengths. We need to encourage entrepreneurs and young professionals and assist them by promoting affordable housing and top-class urban infrastructure, while keeping down costs [especially by containing residential rates and the accumulation of debt by WCC)]. Most of all, it is vital that we continue to promote Wellington as a warm and friendly place that is highly liveable and offers a wide range of entertainment and cultural options.
Wellington has to make the most of its enormous strengths over the next few years. Compact, beside a beautiful harbour, with a smart and educated population — we’ve got a lot going on for us as a city. But we have to stand up proudly, making more of our capital city status, as well as building our private sector so it matches the strength and resilience we enjoy from our public sector. Wellington should better embody what it means to be a Kiwi. We have major sporting, art and cultural institutions in our midst - with more to come. When visitors arrive from outside New Zealand or within they should immediately get a sense that they have arrived in our nation’s capital. That means elevating constitutional tourism, our nation’s proud sporting history and of course our huge strides with film and digital technology.

I want to lead a bold, positive and successful Wellington that gets things done.

As mayor I will lead and champion our dynamic, exceptional, affordable, boutique City and focus on achievable goals striving for a Council Wellington can be proud of, with sound democratic governance practice. I want Wellington to be the cultural and natural capital, the greenest Capital in the World, with a Town Hall fitting our Capital status, sporty, with a thriving economy and World heritage status for our Town Belt.

Wellington needs to be liveable and affordable. This year’s average residential rates increase of 5.4% (which means 7-8% for some households, often the lower value properties) comes after several years of unacceptably high rates increases (over 20% in the past four years) despite record-low inflation of 0.4%. I want Wellington to be one of the world’s most liveable cities, far higher up the international index, so a number of issues need addressing, including (but not limited to) affordable housing, cheaper public transport, traffic congestion, shoring up our ‘cultural capital’ reputation, protecting our heritage, ensuring the city’s night-life remains lively and safe, and creating more green spaces – particularly in the central city, which has seen such dramatic growth in population.
2. **How would you ensure that Wellington City is business-friendly?**

**Jo Coughlan**

The private sector is absolutely critical to Wellington’s success. Council needs to be an enabler and do whatever it does as well as it can, and as efficiently as it can. For example, delays to consents can cost the business sector significant amounts. Council staff need to understand this and need to work to find solutions with the business community. Engagement with the business sector is also critical. Council needs to listen to what business has to say. The city relationship with central government is also critical and as Mayor I will make sure we engage across all political parties at the most senior levels on issues important to the city, many of which are also important to our business people. I have often said council needs to be open for business. As mayor I will ensure that we get our share of central government money to invest in vital infrastructure will ensure the city invests or ensure central government invests in these projects where appropriate. I will manage expenditure wisely and keep rate rises to a minimum. My focus on technology and infrastructure will be a big boost to the domestic economy.

**Andy Foster**

Provide the necessary infrastructure, fantastic lifestyle, continue resilience progress, keep working to make our dynamic central city even more active (events, parks, art etc.) and keep working to make it the main residential growth area (flexible planning rules, car share, amenity etc.). Focus on building relationships with business and Government through regular meetings, and temporary exchanges of personnel. Require regular reporting on ‘open for business’ initiatives. Support emerging businesses through venues like Biz Dojo/Creative HQ, and through exploring potential venture capital facilitation. Active promotion of our city and its businesses. Encouraging buying local where we can. Be really disciplined on expenditure and conduct a thorough assessment of rating policy.

**Keith Johnson**

I do not accept that all businesses are equal in terms of their contributions to the welfare and future prosperity of the city. I write widely on my magazine website ‘Keith Johnson Wellington NZ’ where I have expressed scepticism of the way in which the hospitality, tourism, retail and property development sectors appear to secure special assistance from WCC, while little appears to be done to support the development of knowledge-based industries like tertiary education, ICT, design, innovative manufacturing, and cultural and arts activities. I would be especially receptive to initiatives from the latter, less so to those from the former.

**Nick Leggett**

A Mayor needs to lay out a clear plan, uniting the council and working closely with business, as well as the wider community. That means an ongoing conversation about priorities, but also partnership and seeking opportunities to bring investment and jobs in the city. I would take advice from the private sector about their needs from the council and the significant economic development budget it spends on the city’s behalf.
As Mayor my priority will be to kick-start Wellington's economic growth by:

**Increasing Wellington’s share of the tourism market and international connections**

As Mayor, I’ll:
- Ensure the Movie Museum and Convention Centre is built on Cable St, which will encourage more visitors and longer stays in Wellington.
- Back an airport extension to enable Wellington to have direct international flights to Asia and encourage more business, education, tourism and freight growth to and from Wellington.
- Work to encourage additional residential and hotel investment in our CBD, building on the economic and job potential of these developments.

**Direct business support for the hospitality and retail sector**

As Mayor, I’ll:
- Introduce case management for major building and resource consents: Consent applications can be an unnecessarily bureaucratic and cumbersome experience. There is no tracking of consents online and there is currently no feedback process.
- Remove fees for outdoor dining on public land. This will increase Wellington’s outdoor dining and seating spaces, and support businesses to invest in these spaces. Currently licenses range from $500 to $30,000 per annum depending on the scale of the operation and the licensed area, but raise less than $100,000 for council in total.
- Increase pedestrianisation of CBD precincts and continuing investment in lane-ways; including Wigan St, Bunny St, Forresters Lane and Plimmer Steps.
- Place more emphasis on signature winter events to make sure Wellington is humming all year round.
- Continued investment in events attraction, such as building on CupaDupa to make it a nationally significant event and attraction.

**Investing in Wellington’s digital sector**

- I will introduce a Chief Innovation Officer to the WCC Executive Leadership team. The role will focus on smart city growth and technology-based platforms for local government infrastructure.
- City Growth Fund prioritisation: I will introduce a 20% local procurement criterion for WCC tenders for digital and technology services. This will give local providers an opportunity to grow and provide a fertile testing ground for new technologies.
- I’m going to embed an entrepreneurial culture across Wellington City Council to provide business with the support it needs to succeed:
  1) A city where talent wants to live: One that attracts NZ’s and the world’s best talent
  2) An Open for Business environment: One focused on Start-up incubation (Collider, Creative HQ Lightning Lab and WREDA) and access to capital investment.
  3) A facilitative and supportive partner: One focused on open data provision; international connections through our sister cities network; and employment pathway programmes.
  4) Core infrastructure services that help businesses grow: We need the fastest possible broadband; reliable, free and fast Wi-Fi.
Wellington is made up of small businesses and the public sector. We need to ensure that they remain financially viable. My Council will create and facilitate the environment for that to happen. I am a strong supporter of the “BIDs”, Business improvement Districts which is an excellent initiative. I have worked with business people and communities enthusiastic to make this happen. We need to make sure that all Council dealings with “business” are transparent. Our reputation for a clean corruption free economy is invaluable. I deplore unnecessary bureaucratic blocks to innovation. I want Wellington and Council to be “open for business” in every sense. I will encourage Council to work closely with the Chamber of Commerce and other business organisations. We’ll “build” a City: Strong healthy communities ensure a strong economy.

Affordability is the key, once, again! I would establish a Mayoral advisory panel (not a talk fest), with representatives from all the key sectors (education, ICT, business, property, retail and WECC) and work with them to identify issues to make Wellington more business-friendly. Planning reform is required. The District Plan must be reviewed, simplified, streamlined, and – in some cases – strengthened to ensure it reflects the Wellington we want (the ‘non-notified consents are causing real issues, especially on the fringes of the central city); and our Resource Consent process needs to be more efficient (on-line, for starters) and flexible (with specific case managers for big projects). At the same time, our Building Code must be robust. This has been done in other jurisdictions (for example, Queensland). We need to work pro-actively with commercial property owners and developers, rather than deter them (several are already contemplating withdrawing from Wellington).

3. Would you make any changes to the Long Term Plan 2015/25?

The LTP process is quite a long one. However I would work to add in the various aspects of my “Roadmap for Wellington” which can be found on my website. A key focus is on Infrastructure, resilience and putting Wellington on the global map as an attractive place to live, work, invest and play.

I would mostly focus on delivering what is already in the LTP rather than increase spending. I’d also look for savings (e.g., Basin lights, concert chamber, line by line analysis with external expertise, more disciplined process for annual plans). Better Asset Management planning. Allow choices about levels of service. Seek to get more from NZTA for boulevards. Need some investment in parks and amenity to support CBD population growth. Incorporate new Urban Growth Agency to facilitate development. Must be strategy led – so fill the strategic gap in the social and recreation area to avoid ad hoc decisions.
I would take out the provisional allocation of $90 million for the Wellington Airport Runway Extension for starters – to me this smacks of special pleading for the subsidy of a private profit-making enterprise by residential ratepayers. I would initiate a thoroughgoing review of ‘Other Expenditures’ [which cover the proposed capital investments in the ‘8 Big Ideas’ / Big Spend Programme, in the light of the current strength of the Wellington economy, as it was initiated in response to a temporary downturn in 2013. I would also review allocations for the maintenance and renewal of core infrastructure facilities and eliminate deferred maintenance. I would initiate proper project appraisal (including business case analysis) and monitoring for all capital investment projects. I would end the use of covert special development funds and ensure open tendering and full disclosure for all contracts.

I would immediately request the Chief Executive to source organisational cost savings to offer up to the Annual Planning round. As the “outsider” in this race, I see Wellington City Council as spraying its significant resources in many directions, without a clear idea of the impact of its spending. I would also want to review expenditure on capital projects closely to ensure we have common-sense priorities in place. The significant capital costs that “stick out” to me include the airport extension and concert venue at a combined value of around $150M. However, these might be required, so all capital costs should be reviewed in 2018.

Yes, many. My focus will be on:

1. Strengthening the economy and creating jobs (see response to question 2)
2. Transport improvements to ensure we have a balanced network, including investment in roading infrastructure, more affordable public transport and better walking and cycling facilities.
3. Housing: Ensuring a regular supply of good quality housing and additional construction of homes through an urban development agency called Build Wellington.
4. Arts: Prioritising Arts investment as a key component of Wellington and its economic growth.

I am the longest serving councillor in Wellington and one of the longest in New Zealand. For the first time ever I voted against the long term plan because of its reckless spending proposals—especially for example the unnecessary airport runway extension, concert arenas and a range of so-called big ideas. The subdivision and sale of significant parts of Civic Centre, which should remain as an integrated whole also concerns me, as did the slush funds. I would endeavour to delete all further rates expenditure on the airport runway extension and put up a sensible proposal (again) to have our historic Town Hall strengthened and opened.
I would have a comprehensive review of all projects – targeting waste and vanity projects. The $5.5 million upgrade of Frank Kitts Park (which most don’t want) equates to over 90% of this year’s residential rates increase – that would be top of my list, closely followed by reviewing all Council publications and videos. There would be plenty more!

4. Please list three to five key issues that you consider need addressing by the council over the next three years.

My Roadmap for Wellington (here) has 5 key planks:

**Infrastructure and Transport** – double tunnel The Terrace and Mt Victoria tunnels, sensible cycleways, urban innovators, film museum and conventions centre, airport extension

**Economy and Careers** – relationship with central government, open for business attitude, keep rates fair and reasonable, tech field days, exporting of public sector, support investment, hotel investment, education, promote Wellington uniqueness

**Community and Sport** – support community, mountain biking and walking capital, improving lighting and safe streets, upgrade park spaces and sports fields, help libraries, social and affordable housing, cancer treatment, 50 metre pool

**Environment** – make Wellington pest free, sensible cycle ways, electric cars, public transport, enhance our beaches, waterfront and public places, improve city resilience

**Arts Culture and Events** – look at options for 12000 seat arena, promote film museum and convention centre, incubate film festival, support arts and culture, use sport to promote Wellington.

And we need to work more collaboratively, focussing on great outcomes for Wellington, not ideology or party politics. Let’s crack on and get things done!

Let’s Get Wellington Moving – early next year we will consult on a number of packages of roading, public transport, walking, cycling and urban design components. Decisions will be made by year’s end. These will cover from Aotea off-ramp/Port access right to the airport.

- Providing for population growth including through Urban Development Agency. -We are already NZ’s best prepared city. We will continue resilience work.
- Build better – closer relationships with business, Government, education sector.
- Make an evidence based decision on the airport runway extension.
1. Controlling the overall growth in spending, restraining rate rises, eliminating any further rebalancing of rates rises in favour of the business sector at the expense of residential ratepayers, and ending the accumulation of debt [currently set to rise to over $800 million by 2025].

2. Solving [or at least seriously starting to solve] Wellington’s inner city transport woes. I propose the participatory negotiation of a multi-interest/multi-modal 25-year horizon Transport Accord, using a co-design approach.

    I envisage that this will result in an agreed approach to developing the State Highway 1 corridor from the Terrace Tunnel to the Airport; substantial traffic calming and pedestrianization in the CBD; and the continued development of a network of cycle-ways. I could also lead to initial planning for a rapid transit – light rail link from Wellington Railway Station to the Airport [in the meantime emphasis would be given to improving the service quality and environmental characteristics of bus services].

3. I oppose the Wellington Airport Runway Extension project and will rescind WCC’s $90 million commitment to the proposal.

4. Affordable housing and social housing will be key priorities. For example, I would be keen to re-allocate the $90 million saved on the Runway Extension Project to social housing by making good the loss of #120 units that were lost when HNZ’s Gordon Wilson Flats were red-stickered as earthquake endangered. I would ensure that development contributions are made for affordable housing [for first time buyers] in all major projects [e.g. the Mt Crawford and Erskine College developments].

5. I will ensure that all capital projects pass rigorous economic, business case, equity and environmental scrutiny - and that subsequent implementation, as with all council works and services, is undertaken cost-effectively.

Keith Johnson

Transport - seek a formal alliance with Central Government on State Highway 1 between the Terrace Tunnel to the airport. Such an alliance would seek broad agreement on the need for roading projects on this route, with the promise of consideration of funding and consent over the coming years. This would include the Greater Wellington Regional Council so Public Transport (specifically Bus Rapid Transit) could be wrapped into the agreement. We have to reduce peak time, weekend congestion and ensure travel reliability for all trips.

Resilience and 3-water infrastructure. I am concerned asset renewal in these areas is “light” and I would want this reviewed independently of the council.

Accurate and transparent measuring. I would seek an adoption of the GPI (Genuine Progress Index) or similar measure for Wellington. This includes, but is not limited to GDP and productivity, but also includes health; well-being etc. This would be reported back publicly and would allow Wellingtonians to see openly the progress their council is making on their behalf.

Following on from the above, I believe that Wellington needs a measurable set of goals - constantly referred to and measured - and reviewed on a regular basis. Two key goals would be growth in GDP at a rate higher than the rest of New Zealand and an aim to build the private sector so it makes up a greater proportion of our economy (as a proportion) than it currently does. Wellington – the region – needs a Spatial Plan to plot the development and growth of the region and secure broad agreements on where growth can occur.

Nick Leggett
1. Strengthening the economy and creating jobs (see responses to questions 2 and 3)
2. Reducing congestion by focusing on transport improvements to ensure we have a balanced network, including investment in roading infrastructure (a second tunnel at Mt Victoria and a cut and cover tunnel at the Basin Reserve), more affordable public transport and better walking and cycling facilities.
3. Housing: Ensuring a regular supply of good quality housing and additional construction of homes through an urban development agency called Build Wellington.
4. Arts: Prioritising Arts investment as a key component of Wellington and its economic growth.

Sound open democratic governance and experienced leadership-no more slush funds. Rates relief-I oppose the rates funded $350m-$500m airport runway extension (will call for a referendum if it is not thrown out by the Environment Court). Congestion relief-immediate especially to and from the Eastern Suburbs. Strengthening and opening the Town hall. A Wellington economic summit.

1. Freezing rates at inflation, while protecting core services, by cutting waste
2. Championing economic growth, by working with education providers and the Information Technology (digital) sector
3. Greater transparency, including scrapping Council’s unaccountable slush funds
4. Fixing traffic congestion, including working with Government to get State Highway 1 ‘cut and covered’ (like the Arras Tunnel) to remove traffic from central city
5. Seismic strengthening – working with central Government to get some form of tax relief for heritage building owners (possibly GST rebates, like the UK system); we also need more consistent and transparent seismic standards.
**LEADERSHIP**

5. **What’s your leadership style—how will you lead council and how would you motivate councillors to work together?**

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**Jo Coughlan**

I like working with people and getting outcomes. And I like being positive, inclusive but firm. People like to be heard and want to understand why things have happened or not happened. Good communication and listening skills are important. I’ve demonstrated my leadership style as Chair of the Economic Growth, Arts and Events committee which has seen much success for the city. It’s been a very successful committee. I’ve worked very successfully with other council members and staff to get some great outcomes for the city, such as the Museum and Convention centre, retaining the sevens, getting a long haul flight, establishing WREDA and a Tech Hub amongst many other outcomes of the 2011 Economic Strategy which my committee pulled together and implemented. More recently, I was able to get the whole transport committee, which I don’t Chair, to vote unanimously to shift council funding towards the iconic harbour cycleway I have been championing. Everyone has something to contribute, but the trick is to get everyone aligned to a shared vision and outcomes as we did on the committee with the 2011 Economic strategy. We need to encouraging robust debate and challenge but it should not be about party politics or ideologies. I would set an expectation that it is about doing what’s best for Wellington.

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**Andy Foster**

First action is to take councillors and senior management away, get to know each other, and what people want to achieve and develop a coherent strategy – then commit to delivery. Sign up to a way of operating, I expect robust debate but it must be focused on issues and not personalities. Once issues are determined we must move on. Involve councillors in mayoral commitments as appropriate and keep them informed. This includes some of regular meetings with business – may bring in an appropriate councillor. Schedule regular meetings with individual councillors. Caucus the challenging issues.

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**Keith Johnson**

I do not believe that Wellingtonians need or want Visionary Leadership built around flashy big ticket spending. Our citizens are practical, creative and independent-minded and more than capable of shaping their own futures, given cost-effective basic services. I have been described as a ‘Typical Wellingtonian’ which I take as a great compliment – my campaign motto is ‘Caring about Costs: Caring about People’ (i.e. as Nikki Macdonald has commented in the Dom ‘Policy + Poetry’). I want to get councillors back to work in delivering efficient facilities and supporting grass-roots community initiatives. I will reward them for doing the basics well.
I’m open and collaborative. I would discard party political agendas to unite the council around a shared vision for Wellington. As a Mayor, I’ve had a record that shows I’m quick to identify opportunities, work hard to ensure they are realised and ensure they are followed through. One example is the direct flights to Canberra, where the current Mayor of Wellington was twice unable to see the Chief Minister of ACT who wished to initiate discussions with the council. I was contacted by his office and was able to meet with him and put him in contact with the correct officials at Wellington City Council. A Mayor’s job is to see the big picture and connect people.

I lead by example. I am diligent, professional, and courteous and seek to empower teams I am leading. I’ve led my own business for over 10 years with 50 employees and have worked as a Director and had good success in the private sector. I’m also experienced in community leadership and follow the principle of servant leadership, where it is my role to serve the community first and foremost for the benefit of others.

The primary role of the mayor is to champion the City. It is also to lead the Council. My effective and successful leadership is evident and on the public record. Sound democratic governance practice is essential-free and frank advice from officers and clear open and transparent decision-making processes for governance. I will motivate councillors to put the City and the people first. I would encourage consensus wherever possible, recognising however that councillors are entitled to expressed different views. I would encourage councillors to play the ball not the “man”/woman-talk to the issues and discourage ad hominem debate. Constructive positive atmosphere as far as is possible. Trust, respect (regardless of a different view), integrity, focus.

I have worked successfully both as a leader, and in teams, in the commercial world in Wellington and the City of London. Clarity, certainty, consistency and candour are important to me. I am a straight-shooter who consults, thinks, then acts; I am also kind, inclusive and treat people with respect and courtesy. After the election, there will at least five new councillors so I would organise an away day (or two) so we can get to know each other (this was not done after the 2013 election). I would spend time with every councillor to identify their priorities, explain mine, identify mutual priorities and gauge councillors’ competencies. I would ask councillors to focus on common goals, rather than our differences; accepting trade-offs are inevitable – for everyone! I would operate a Cabinet model, with committee chairs signing an undated letter of resignation (as used by Holyoake). The committee structure would be streamlined, to ensure fewer & shorter meetings (and more concise papers) so councillors would have more time to work in their communities (or other work – which might encourage more people to stand in future elections. The Code of Conduct would be strictly enforced, and there would be consequences for bad behaviour and leaking (it’s easy to spot the transgressors, as they are always quoted in the article!). I would also foster a culture of reliability and punctuality.
6. How will you allocate council portfolios—equally amongst councillors or based on councillor’s skill set and capability?

I believe we should be as business-like and professional as possible. This suggests making appointments based on ability and skill set. We also have many councillors expected to be re-elected who have experience of council processes which is also an important consideration.

Jo Coughlan

Based on skills and capabilities. We are going to have a very, very inexperienced Council. Take the opportunity to build skills and knowledge in less experienced councillors so that they can step into roles later in the triennium if they are ready. There must also be some reward and consequences for councillors’ behaviour within the group – confidentiality to be respected. Behaviour to be rewarded appropriately.

Andy Foster

By skill set and capability.

Keith Johnson

I think every councillor deserves some responsibility; however I would revert to a committee structure rather than a portfolio model. The latter is a bit parliamentary for my liking and as I have said, Wellington City Council isn’t a “mini Beehive.” Councillors are each delegated one vote and must all take responsibility for the decisions of the council. Those chairing committees will be allocated the job based on experience and skills.

Nick Legget

I will allocate portfolios based on skills and capability.

Justin Lester

I am giving this significant thought now—who will be my deputy mayor and how the elected Council will be organised. In leadership positions in the past that I have held, I have found that passionate portfolio interest is essential. These are political/governance positions. Skill set per se is not necessarily what is needed and from my observation over time it sometimes contaminates the process of free and frank advice to councillors in governance who then meddle. Councillors are not managers or “experts”—they are there to take advice, to weigh it up and make decisions.

Helene Ritchie
Nicola Young

Portfolios would be allocated according to skills, ability & experience in the subject; the flat system currently in use (where everyone has a portfolio, some of them meaningless) does not foster accountability. I would encourage new councillors to take on major responsibilities, possibly in preference to long-term councillors.

7. How will you work with other councils in the region?

I want a positive, constructive close working relationship. On many issues we are best to work as a regional team. All our cities will be best served if the region cooperates. The amalgamation horse has bolted. I want to focus more on opportunities for shared services.

Jo Coughlan

Of all the candidates I undoubtedly have the closest and most regular existing relationships with other Mayors, senior councillors and management. My relationships are very warm and I am a very strong believer in the local government family. For example I am engaging on several transport and urban planning issues with GWRC now. I would continue to build on the collaborative relationships I already have. I was a director of Capacity (now Wellington Water) as we worked to bring the 4 cities-3 waters operations together. I want to see more collaboration particularly in transport, planning and waste.

Andy Foster

I would put a good deal of effort into working effectively with the other councils in the region – it is clearly a single economy and Wellington City owes some responsibility to the outlying parts of the region in ensuring their continued prosperity and growth. I was very upset to learn that a large proportion of teenagers in disadvantaged areas like Cannon’s Creek have never visited the CBD and would work hard to ensure that Wellington City is seen as a good-hearted neighbour [e.g. by inviting in kids and initiating dialogues with interested communities / community groups in the wider region].

Keith Johnson

Collaboratively. I have an advantage here above the other candidates because not only do I have existing relationships with other councils, I can also identify with their individual financial and scale situations more easily. Wellington City doesn’t have much of a concept of the rest of the region currently. Many of the councillors here believe their interests finish at the border of this city. My experience shows there is a mutually dependent relationship between Wellington and the other parts of the region – for skills, labour, future growth and regional recreation and sporting assets. Much more could happen if the Wellington council reached out and worked with other council’s on planning and other shared services. If we are to grow and improve our economic position as a region, we need more alignment, work out how to grow faster and identify opportunities where there isn’t competition between existing local authorities. For instance, Wellington City could better support Hutt’s “Tech Valley” initiative.

Nick Leggett
Over the past three years as Deputy Mayor I’ve shown I can and will work effectively with other Councils. We have created WREDA, Wellington Water and shared IT services via the Odyssey project. I’d like to see more shared services for transport and waste, which all of the region’s mayors have now agreed to alongside the Local Government Commission.

I get on very well with Mayors and Deputy Mayors across the region and have found them very constructive.

Effectively in collaboration and cooperatively as appropriate and as I have done much of over the years.

I have served on the Local Government New Zealand’s Zone 4 committee, and also a member of its marketing and branding working party so already know many of the key players (subject to the outcome of October 8). My approach would be consistent with the way I behaved as mayor; I would identify areas of common interest, and work together to achieve results to benefit the whole Wellington region. I would organise regular (six-monthly?) regional get-togethers (rotating across the region), where issues would be discussed, solutions identified; at the same time, the host council could show case its particular problems – and success stories. I favour a regional transport authority, rather than the current fractured model where responsibilities are divided between WCC, GWRC, and NZTA.
8. Do you support the use of differential rates, whereby all business ratepayers pay more than residential ratepayers per dollar of rateable land? (The differential is 1:2.8)

The rating differential was excessively high in years gone by. I am comfortable with the current level. Most importantly council needs to be performing well to provide a good return to ratepayers on the rates bill and this requires an efficient council, a progressive council and a council that is investing in infrastructure, technology and resilience and making sure it gets value for money for every dollar spent.

Jo Coughlan

Rates differentials should be based on robust analysis of the relative benefits received by the sectors. Benefits will not be likely to be the same between sectors, but will be driven by the mix of services Council provides. With several large new services in recent years it is appropriate to undertake a first principles reassessment to allocate benefits and funding. I would like to reduce the services funded through General Rate and instead allocate more of those costs through targeted rates (residential / business) which would be more robust.

Andy Foster

YES [See response to Question 9].

Keith Johnson

Yes. Rates are a property tax and I support the principle of progressive taxation. As Mayor I would be open to discussion about rating differentials. I believe there has to be strong consideration of alternative funding methods for Local Government.

Nick Leggett

Yes, differential rates across the country are very common. In Auckland it is 1:2.76, Porirua is 1:3.5 and Lower Hutt 1:3.14. Over the last 10 years the rates differential in Wellington has decreased from 1:7 to the current level, which I supported because it was far too high. If we lower the rates differential we would simply transfer the rates burden to residential ratepayers, many of whom are on fixed incomes and cannot off-set the cost of rates. Businesses are able to offset GST and the cost of rates against their taxable income.

Justin Lester
This is not a current issue for Council. I cannot “decide” this here, out of context of the entire budget. A fair and reasonable balance must be struck as far as is possible.

Helene Ritchie

Differential rates seem inherently unfair, especially as many of the Council’s services are irrelevant to business ratepayers (community sport, swimming pools, and libraries for example). My top priority is to reduce rates for everyone, but I would certainly be open to removing the differential (bearing in mind many commercial ratepayers also pay additional fees, such as the Downtown levy).

Nicola Young

9. **Do you think it’s justifiable that Wellington city businesses pays the highest rates in New Zealand? If so, why?** (Currently 46% of the total rate-take, while making up 21% of the rateable property. This includes general rates, targeted rates and business-specific levies)

The reality is Wellington city does have a very high business concentration relative to other cities in NZ. The rates take in my view is only justifiable if we give businesses the best services in New Zealand. We need to run an efficient council that delivers value for money. That is my goal.

Jo Coughlan

I think they are on the high side of what could be justified. The process I have described above should be used to reassess. As I said it is the make-up of the services Council provides that should influence who pays for what. If a sector gets more, reasonably it might expect to pay more. There are arguably some services funded through general rates which could comfortably be paid through targeted rates.

Andy Foster
I have been trying to track down some comparative figures for relative business rates burdens across local government areas in New Zealand but so far I have found nothing to substantiate WECC’s claim of unique hardship. The problem for WECC is that many of its members in the tourism, hospitality, retail and property development sectors are direct beneficiaries of the kinds of Big Ideas/Big Spend ‘Wish List and Lolly Scramble’ promises of the Mainstream Mayoral Candidates—so, to keep these sectors happy, WECC has to try to load further burdens on Residential Ratepayers.

Let’s just explore one of the many ironies here. Mainstream candidate Jo Coughlan has chided Residential Ratepayers and those [like me] who champion their cause in restricting their rate rises. Jo argues that: ‘Council spending, as reflected in the rates burden, is minuscule in the average household budget, being the equivalent of no more than the cost of a cup of coffee per day.’

Ergo, if this is true [it’s not – and rates are a particular burden on poorer householders and first-time buyers – but let’s leave these points for another day], the Business Community of Wellington is buying Two Cups of Coffee per day [+ a biscotti] – hardly worth crying into your Latte Froth about!

And it’s also important to remember that:

1. Rates are a tax deductible expense for businesses – so that one of their coffees or so in every three comes essentially free
2. Much of the demand for CBD property comes from central government – again funded indirectly by general tax payers.

And as a friend of mine said with some anger recently: “Why should residential rate payers make any contribution whatsoever to projects like the proposed film museum [where presumably they will also have to pay an entrance user-charge fee] or the convention centre and airport runway extension projects which primarily benefit foreigners, and promoters in the tourism, hospitality, retail and property development sectors?”

I think this will be harder to justify over time, however my first approach would be grappling with the projects and items that both capex and opex is spent on! I think that property owners and businesses located in the CBD should be given more of a say on where their special levies are spent. Too much control currently sits with the council.

Wellington is extremely fortunate that we have a strong commercial rate-paying base, which is why the percentage of the total rates take is high relative to other cities. This is a reflection of a strong CBD and a comparatively small number of residential ratepayers compared to Auckland and Christchurch for example. The 46% figure is therefore misleading.
It seems that you are not comparing apples with apples here. Levies are not rates for example. Rates are not simply based on who pays the most (or least) gets the most (or least) benefit and the modus operandi of businesses and residential ratepayers, and small and Corporates are all different as are the taxation regimes. This is a matter which cannot be readily answered in a short questionnaire. Affordable rates for services provided are key. Sensible rates for essential services. We all have to be able to afford to live and work in this wonderful City of ours.

No.

Nicola Young

10. What are your views on the council’s use of debt to fund projects?

Our debt levels are not excessive. We need to borrow for essential infrastructure projects with a long life so as to ensure inter-generational equity. Alongside the ‘balance sheet’ considerations for council, I want to ensure the council is operating is efficiently as possible, freeing up cash flows where possible so as to support long-term investment.

Jo Coughlan

Debt is a perfectly acceptable tool to fund initiatives that have long life and will deliver benefits over a long period. Council has an AA Credit rating (should be higher than Govt). However I am very conscious that we should not build too high a level of debt. That means taking a bit of time to ‘digest’ some of the larger projects and we need to be very disciplined about the investments we make. I think we should cut the ten year capital programme by approx. $80 million minimum (Concert venue, reduce Basin lights cost from $9-2m, expect NZTA contribution to Boulevards). Contingencies on larger capital projects need to be more tightly managed and monitored. I think we should get debt and therefore rates onto a lower pathway than currently projected. I think that if people talk about cost and debt reductions you need to ask them to be specific about how they would achieve that – got to be more than just words.

Andy Foster

Debt is a tax on the younger generation – and young people are already bearing the cost of the dismantling of state support for higher education [and the accompanying student loan burden] while the older generation benefits from relatively high central government spending on superannuation and health services. I am totally against further expanding debt levels.

Keith Johnson
I am supportive of the use of debt. I am more interested in considering whether the chosen projects are the correct ones and whether they support the general direction the city and the council wish to take.

Nick Leggett

I would not support acquiring any more debt than is necessary, but debt funding allows for intergenerational equity across service users for the life of an asset. On this basis it is highly sensible and the most responsible way to pay for an asset. The alternative would be to pay upfront for the asset, which would mean the cost would be borne by today’s ratepayers and all future ratepayers would use the asset for free. A second alternative would be to sell assets, which I firmly oppose, because the assets WCC owns, such as Wellington City Council’s commercial ground leases or our shareholding in Wellington International Airport Ltd, generate a significantly higher yield than the interest costs of servicing the debt.

Justin Lester

I am concerned at the way in which Council has proposed a range of projects to be debt funded. There used to be legislative provision for ratepayers to be able to petition for a loan poll. Intergenerational loans should be for essential services. I think it is irresponsible and reckless to raise loans and impose on future generations unnecessary vanity projects of politicians. The airport runway extension is one such project—the largest one such project in the history of Wellington.

Helene Ritchie

Debt needs to be used with caution, but it is perfectly acceptable for intergenerational projects.

Nicola Young
11. **Do you think the council has an appropriate level of debt?**

**Jo Coughlan**

Yes, I am comfortable with the current level. According to the WCC Pre Election report 2016, Council has assets worth $7,109 million and liabilities of $594 million (source 2016/17 annual plan) the Councils investments are worth $368.5 million against our net borrowings of $393.7 million (from 2015/16 estimated unaudited accounts subject to change). Council remains well within borrowing limits prescribed by the council approved financial strategy. However we do need to be conscious that while interest rates are currently low, this may not always be the case.

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**Andy Foster**

I think the current level of debt is manageable. Low interest rates help a lot. We have an exceptional AA credit rating. However I am concerned that the planned rates trajectory is from $400 million now to $800 million in 10 years. I would like to reduce that level of debt increase (as above) which will also reduce back rates needed to service that debt. I want a Budget task-force including external expertise to scrutinise Council operating and in this case capital projects, and to improve the quality and depth of reporting on project delivery. Finally I think we need to spread some of the capital expenditure over a longer period. I want to manage contingencies on capital projects more tightly too.

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**Keith Johnson**

It should be reduced if possible but provision needs to be made for the responsible financing of capital spending that is already in train.

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**Nick Leggett**

I am relatively comfortable with the level of debt and appreciate it is projected to grow over the next few years. Given the overall asset base of the council, it is has one of the lowest levels of debt in Local Government.

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**Justin Lester**

Wellington City Council has significantly lower levels of debt than both Auckland City Council and Central Government. Standard & Poor’s has (technically) ranked Wellington City Council’s financial platform as the strongest in New Zealand, higher even than Central Government, but technically no territorial authority can be ranked higher than the sovereign state it resides within. I would not support acquiring any more debt than is necessary, but debt funding allows for intergenerational equity across service users for the life of an asset and is therefore highly sensible.
No. We should live within our means not impose debt on future generations for vanity projects.

Helene Ritchie

While interest rates are low, I think there is a case for getting key projects off the ground.

Nicola Young
My infrastructure projects will contribute directly to productivity gains and other initiatives in my “Roadmap for Wellington” will help attract more business and investment to Wellington. This builds on many of the initiatives from the 2011 Economic Development Strategy, developed by the committee I chaired, which set a target of 10,000 new jobs. This has basically been achieved. While we have done a lot of things, there is still more to do. My Roadmap will help to create jobs and grow the regional economy. I am pro-business and want to ensure there is a welcoming attitude from council to the business community.

My Roadmap for Wellington (here) has 5 key planks:

**Infrastructure and Transport** – double tunnel The Terrace and Mt Victoria tunnels, sensible cycleways, urban innovators, film museum and conventions centre, airport extension

**Economy and Careers** – relationship with central government, open for business attitude, keep rates fair and reasonable, tech field days, exporting of public sector, support investment, hotel investment, education, promote Wellington uniqueness

**Community and Sport** – support community, mountain biking and walking capital, improving lighting and safe streets, upgrade park spaces and sports fields, help libraries, social and affordable housing, cancer treatment, 50 metre pool

**Environment** – make Wellington pest free, sensible cycle ways, electric cars, public transport, enhance our beaches, waterfront and public places, improve city resilience

**Arts Culture and Events** – look at options for 12000 seat arena, promote film museum and convention centre, incubate film festival, support arts and culture, use sport to promote Wellington.

Our primary job is to provide the stage for business to act on. That means infrastructure, coherent planning to accommodate growth, keeping improving an already fantastic lifestyle offer. It means promoting Wellington’s interests to Government, around the country and internationally. It means investing directly in projects with a solid business case like the Film Museum and Convention Centre. It means continuing to support business incubators like Biz Dojo/Creative HQ, Toi Poneke, and events and the work of WREDA. I’ll explore better ways of connecting education to employers and emerging businesses to capital. It also means keeping talking and building a stronger, deeper relationship with business.
Growth’ can be a simple-minded concept that benefits the few at the cost of the welfare of the many. On all developments, we need to constantly ask:

- Are they properly targeted [effective] and will they be well-implemented and managed [efficient]?
- Are they fair? Do they benefit a wide spectrum of citizens impartially or are they responding to special interests?
- Are they socially and environmentally responsible? Do they look to the longer term interests of the city and its citizens?

That said and done, I will be open to considering any and all proposals from well-meaning and good-hearted project promoters.

I would utilise the existing relationships with Central Government to leverage information and knowledge of emerging trends and changes in our economy so Wellington can better anticipate opportunities and identify areas where it has critical advantage over other parts of New Zealand. The council and associated economic development agencies role are to work in partnership with Government and business. I would continue the work of the council to open doors internationally and look to support the needs of existing businesses within Wellington. We must protect what we have and develop new opportunities for those currently paying the bills. If Wellington is to grow, the council must be “open for business” and be welcoming of development and change. This can often be a struggle for Local Authorities. Bringing down the anti-growth barriers comes from the top and a Mayor must make this clear to their council and the Council Chief Executive. The new Mayor must also have a good relationship with the Greater Wellington Regional Council to ensure they are less of a planning “block” on changes across the region.
1. **Increase Wellington’s share of the tourism market and international connections**
   - ensure the Movie Museum and Convention Centre is built on Cable St, which will encourage more visitors and longer stays in Wellington.
   - back an airport extension to enable Wellington to have direct international flights to Asia and encourage more business, education, tourism and freight growth to and from Wellington.
   - work to encourage additional residential and hotel investment in our CBD, building on the economic and job potential of these developments.

2. **Direct business support for the hospitality and retail sector**
   - introduce case management for major building and resource consents: Consent applications can be an unnecessarily bureaucratic and cumbersome experience. There is no tracking of consents online and there is currently no feedback process.
   - remove fees for outdoor dining on public land. This will increase Wellington's outdoor dining and seating spaces, and support businesses to invest in these spaces. Currently licenses range from $500 to $30,000 per annum depending on the scale of the operation and the licensed area, but raises less than $100,000 for council in total.
   - increase pedestrianisation of CBD precincts and continuing investment in laneways; including Wigan St, Bunny St, Forresters Lane and Plimmer Steps.
   - place more emphasis on signature winter events to make sure Wellington is humming all year round.
   - continued investment in events attraction, such as building on CupaDupa to make it a nationally significant event and attraction.

3. **Investing in Wellington’s digital sector**
   I will introduce a Chief Innovation Officer to the WCC Executive Leadership team. The role will focus on smart city growth and technology-based platforms for local government infrastructure.
   - City Growth Fund prioritisation: I will introduce a 20% local procurement criterion for WCC tenders for digital and technology services. This will give local providers an opportunity to grow and provide a fertile testing ground for new technologies.
   - I’m going to embed an entrepreneurial culture across Wellington City Council to provide business with the support it needs to succeed:
     1) A city where talent wants to live: One that attracts NZ’s and the world’s best talent
     2) An Open for Business environment: One focused on Start-up incubation (Collider, Creative HQ Lightning Lab and WRED) and access to capital investment.
     3) A facilitative and supportive partner: One focused on open data provision; international connections through our sister cities network; and employment pathway programmes.
     4) Core infrastructure services that help businesses grow: We need the fastest possible broadband; reliable, free and fast Wi-Fi.
I would call for an Economic Summit. The Chamber would be an important part of this Summit. I have a range of ideas—but the collective ideas are more relevant, so just three here now:

1. Greater acknowledgement, advancement and innovation, and research, of the place in our economy of the largest employer in Wellington – Health, and associated, including the Medical School.
2. Celebrate our accessible quality domestic airport as a strategic asset fundamental to doing business in Wellington.
3. Ensure Council retains its role as facilitator and catalyst and is open for business.
4. Recognise the role of coffee in our economy!

WREDA has been slow in getting established; it must be run on commercial, not bureaucratic lines and with more transparent accountability. We need to be certain that the money is being well-spent, and we need to see results! Wellington’s tertiary education sector is vital to our economic growth. Council needs to join forces with the universities to package and market Wellington to the world, to attract more international students (at present Wellington has 8% of the NZ total, only 2% ahead of Hamilton) and facilitate Wellington as a research centre. At present, there are good relationships at officer level, but poor political ones. Wellington needs a strategy to attract more migrants, as they set up new businesses and enhance the city’s cosmopolitan reputation. Free, high-speed WiFi in the central city should be investigated. Internet connectivity is the equivalent of road, rail and ships for many New Zealand companies. Wellington is a long way from our physical markets; we can’t shorten the distance, but we can focus on weightless exports and Wellington has some world-beating digital companies.

13. **What do you define as core or strategic assets of council?**

Primarily these are those public good assets which are not otherwise going to be provided in an efficient manner by the private sector or by central government. In other words, the drains, pipes and other essential infrastructure of the city, which often isn’t seen. In addition to this are social infrastructure assets such as sports fields and facilities, various event venues, libraries, playgrounds and parks. I am not proposing selling any significant assets or investments held by the city but do want to see what opportunities there may be for surplus land to be released for housing development and am open-minded to private sector investment alongside council where this delivers a better return than if it was council-alone.

Probably easier to say what isn’t – the airport stake and perhaps ground leases fit into that category. Asset classes like 3 waters, solid waste, transport assets, parks/reserves, community facilities, are all core. Buildings that we deliver services from don’t have to be owned but by and large they are – museums, performance venues, convention facilities etc.
The Local Government Act 2002 states that the purpose of local government is:

- To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities
- To meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.

I will implement the Act [and, with respect to the first point, ensure the development of a much more effective and comprehensive and interactive WCC website to facilitate public participation].

Core assets include transport and 3-water infrastructural assets, community amenities such as libraries, housing stock, sporting grounds, cultural facilities and general buildings and land. Strategic assets would include land or buildings or services that give a return, including the airport. And those that could have value added to them for either private or public use.

Our Council employees and our assets and infrastructure are all core assets. These include: the transport network, the three waters network, the airport (1/3 share), Wellington’s natural environment, reserves, parks, sports fields, libraries, swimming pools, community centres and much more.

This question does not make sense but I will try to understand what you mean.

Core assets are not the same as strategic assets. Water, waste, sewage, roads, footpaths, libraries, housing, our natural environment-pest management and tracks and biodiversity, Wellington the cultural capital, our heritage. The assets are the land, buildings, infrastructure associated. The airport is a strategic asset, so is the Town Hall and Civic Centre and others on the Significance list.

Parks and reserves, venues (including the Town Hall – the strengthening work MUST start), libraries, community sports facilities, swimming pools, WIAL (minority shareholding), water, roads, social housing.
14. Please list three things you would do to attract investment or to attract businesses to set up, relocate or expand in the city/region.

**Jo Coughlan**

Implement my “Roadmap for Wellington” as outlined above and on my [website](#) which has 5 key planks but if I had to pick out 3:

- Remove the transport and other bottlenecks by upgrading the city’s infrastructure, e.g., double tunnel The Terrace and Mt Victoria tunnels, airport extension etc.
- Promoting Wellington’s uniqueness. Implement “Tech field days” initiative, continue to support events, and WREDA
- Enhance relationships with central government especially the Prime Minister, senior Minister and leaders of all parties, along with the private sector, and have an “open for business” attitude from council and council staff.

**Andy Foster**

I take this to be about attracting specific businesses not generally creating the environment. Explore venture capital fund (Council as facilitator not investor) to connect emerging businesses with investors looking for a portfolio approach to investment.

WREDA and myself as Mayor marketing Wellington overseas as a relatively inexpensive, well connected, corruption free place to do business, with a welcoming attitude, and great lifestyle. Through WREDA assist new businesses to find premises – and welcome them and introduce them to Wellington. Help smooth their path through consent processes. In short to roll out the red carpet.

**Keith Johnson**

I have spent my career working as a development economist and public policy adviser and would bring my skills and experience to bear on attracting the right kinds and magnitudes of investment. In particular, I spent a good deal of my early and mid-career working in the Middle East and Asia (latterly working for 7 years as an economist and then senior development policy officer with the Asian Development Bank based in Manila, Philippines working on project planning and policy reform issues) and I would use my knowledge and contacts to promote Wellington’s business profile and attract foreign direct investment. I would diversify interest, for example, towards a range of emerging economies in Asia and not put all our eggs in a Chinese basket. I also spent 7 years in Canberra and would promote greater links with our twin sister city, as well as using my UK background and experience to promote links to Europe. I have a very cosmopolitan and open mindset on business opportunities and would emphasize e-networking with potential overseas partners.
Strongly support Tertiary Education to continue to grow its brand for Wellington and ensure it is connected to international markets.

Work to promote Wellington as a destination for additional technology businesses, VR and AR and start-ups.

I would look at a specific strategy to target those successful or emerging international businesses whose work forces are motivated by a great lifestyle, but whose operations can function from anywhere in the world. Wellington should actively pursue these opportunities to complement our economy and current skills and workforce.

1. Increase Wellington’s share of the tourism market and international connections

   - Ensure the Movie Museum and Convention Centre is built on Cable St, which will encourage more visitors and longer stays in Wellington.
   - Back an airport extension to enable Wellington to have direct international flights to Asia and encourage more business, education, tourism and freight growth to and from Wellington.

2. I’ll provide direct business support for the hospitality and retail sector

   As Mayor, I’ll:
   - Introduce case management for major building and resource consents: Consent applications can be an unnecessarily bureaucratic and cumbersome experience. There is no tracking of consents online and there is currently no feedback process.
   - Remove fees for outdoor dining on public land. This will increase Wellington’s outdoor dining and seating spaces, and support businesses to invest in these spaces. Currently licenses range from $500 to $30,000 per annum depending on the scale of the operation and the licensed area, but raises less than $100,000 for council in total.
   - Increase pedestrianisation of CBD precincts and continuing investment in laneways; including Wigan St, Bunny St, Forresters Lane and Plimmer Steps.
   - Place more emphasis on signature winter events to make sure Wellington is humming all year round.
   - Continued investment in events attraction, such as building on CupaDupa to make it a nationally significant event and attraction.

3. I’ll invest in Wellington’s digital sector

   I will introduce a Chief Innovation Officer to the WCC Executive Leadership team. The role will focus on smart city growth and technology-based platforms for local government infrastructure.
I have answered this above. As well:
Provide some seeding funds for innovation and creativity in an open and transparent way.
Champion Wellington as the cultural and natural Capital of Aoteroa/New Zealand.

Helene Ritchie

Work with universities to attract more international students and retain graduates. Investigate what Council can do to encourage existing businesses to improve, and stay in the region. Have a ‘buy local’ policy whenever possible.

Nicola Young
INFRASTRUCTURE

15. **What are your priorities for infrastructural investment in the Wellington region over the next five to ten years?**

Transport – double tunnel The Terrace and Mr Victoria tunnels and four lanes to the planes, utilising central government money which as Mayor I would strongly lobby for. If the business case stacks up, a consent is given and appropriate funding secured, extend the runway; a new 12000 seat arena, potential swimming pool, an iconic harbour cycleway and also making sure the city is resilient with key services such as water, electricity and broadband.

Jo Coughlan

Delivering the outcomes of Let’s Get Wellington Moving – addressing roading, public transport, walking and cycling and urban design improvements – notably boulevard Kent-Cambridge Terraces and Adelaide Road – and facilitating commercial and residential development along both corridors. We will cover Port Access, making the central city even more people friendly, Basin, Tunnel and through to the Southern and Eastern suburbs. There will be options in public to consider in the first quarter of 2017. Continuing with our comprehensive infrastructure/building resilience programme. Supporting the provision of housing for a growing and ageing population – working with the private sector to deliver that, with facilitation through our new Urban Development Agency.

Andy Foster

1. Up-to-date physical maintenance and well-planned basic infrastructure asset replacement and the provision of all necessary upgrading to provide security of service and resilience in the case of natural disasters.

2. Active support for the adoption and widespread provision of the latest / most cost-effective Information Communication Technology and its application across all sectors of the economy.

Keith Johnson

Roading, water storage and stormwater upgrades. Address transport answers and the need to review replacement and renewals along with evaluation of a potential economic benefit to a higher level of service in any of the above areas. Heavier and more concentrated rainfall shows us that in many parts of the region, our stormwater networks are not up to standard. We need to identify the critical areas of Wellington City (potentially Te Aro) where investment might be required to increase the level of service so additional rainfall can be absorbed without a flooding event that impacts business continuity and activity.

Nick Leggett
i. Removing congestion points on our SH1 network by completing the Petone to Grenada link road, a second tunnel at Mt Victoria and a cut and cover tunnel at the Basin Reserve; and a duplicate tunnel at the terrace.

ii. Moving to fully electric buses for public transport usage

iii. Completing the movie museum and convention centre complex

iv. Earthquake strengthening Council’s assets including the Town Hall and other buildings and transport and water infrastructure. I will continue to support building owners strengthen heritage buildings and other earthquake prone buildings.

v. Planning for Wellington’s long term public transport needs. Given the density and compactness of Wellington I expect trams or light rail will play a pivotal role over the next 10-15 years and should be considered on the transport corridor between Wellington railway station and the airport.

vi. Considering the international connectivity at Wellington Airport and whether it should be extended, subject to resource consent approval, central Government funding and commitment from an airline partner.

See 14. Essential services.

Sort congestion by improving our key roads, with a particular focus on our main exit routes, and ensuring State Highway 1 is effectively a ring road. Establish a combined transport authority, with a clear mandate to sort public transport (quality, affordability, reliability), improve cycling in the central city, ensure Wellington remains a walkable city and – possibly – install fast electric chargers (in conjunction with the private sector)
16. **Do you support the runway extension at Wellington Airport? If so, how do you think it should funded?**

**Jo Coughlan**
Yes if its gets a consent, has a good business case and we can get appropriate funding. In terms of funding, if the city contributes, it should be reflected in its shareholding in some way. It should not be a donation. Central and possibly regional government should contribute and of course the airport company. There may be some private sector interest. The whole project and the city’s involvement in it will take some negotiation and the city needs to careful work through this.

**Andy Foster**
Yes if it stacks up, no if it doesn’t. This is a very large investment and as the Chamber has rightly said should be determined by a rigorous economic and financial assessment. To pass muster the runway must get resource consent, there must be reasonable evidence of airline commitment (right locations, frequency, length of commitment), assessment of whether the benefits can be achieved in other ways (a la current Singapore Air deal), benefit to the economy, and of course funding. Finally the asset should not sit on WIAL’s balance sheet but with an investment vehicle owned by the funders. I hope it gets across those hurdles but they are substantive and we need to take a hard headed business-like approach to determining whether to proceed or not. As much as possible all information pertinent to the decision should be made available to the Wellington community so that it can be scrutinised by everyone.

**Keith Johnson**
I have written widely about this topic on my website ‘Keith Johnson Wellington NZ’ and have been a long-standing opponent of the project and its proposed subsidization by residential ratepayers. To me it is utterly extraordinary and potentially catastrophically dangerous to plan to fly in planeloads of tourists from Guangzhou non-stop and land them on a runway which will still not meet recommended standards for Runway Extension Safety Areas (the norm is 210 metres either end – WIAL proposes 90 metres), especially when Wellington can experience gale-force winds on up to 250 days per year. The idea that residential ratepayers should subsidize this folly, when WIAL has already completed a shorter extension over the southern perimeter road at its own cost and when it admits that its own business case for the project falls well short of commercial viability, is bizarre and monstrously unfair.

**Nick Leggett**
Yes I support the runway extension. Once consent is granted there needs to be work on a funding and business case that allows Wellingtonians to get the “full picture” of the project. I don’t support the ratepayer funding the airport extension beyond the council’s shareholding.
Justin Lester

Yes, subject to resource consent approval, central Government funding and commitment from an airline partner. 1/3 should be funded by Wellington International Airport Ltd, 1/3 by Local Government and 1/3 by Central Government.

Helene Ritchie

No. An unnecessary, rates-funded $350m-$500m vanity project for political/corporate gain, instead of housing or rates relief (including for small businesses!). I’m calling for a Citizens loan poll/referendum, if the Environment Court does not throw it out. Wellington Airport, a very important part should be recognised for what it is, and how it benefits our economy—the key domestic transport hub in the country. The Wellington Airport Runway Extension is guessed to cost an estimated $350-$500 Million, and the council planning to commit $90 million but with other formal funders. The Government does not support it, Pilots are challenging it, Air New Zealand is opposing, 21 airline members of BARNZ are opposing it, and no one has come forward formerly to fund it other than the ratepayers of Wellington. The disruption and impact on the Eastern suburbs during construction and on the rest of the City with rubble laden trucks (60 an hour); and construction at night during the curfew will be great. Ratepayer funded debt should not be used for this unjustifiable project.

Nicola Young

I don’t support the runway extension. I did initially, provided Infratil funded it in line with its 66% shareholding – not depend on ratepayers (and possibly taxpayers) to fund it as I am opposed to corporate welfare. Now I believe it will be a very costly ‘white elephant’. Frequent flyers use airlines linked to their loyalty programme (Star Alliance – Air NZ, One World – QANTAS) so would be less interested in flying on point-to-point airlines (because they are not part of the two big loyalty programmes); frequent flyers will continue to fly via Auckland. It won’t lead to an increased number of people flying internationally from Wellington. Incentivising airlines is hugely expensive: WIAL may be able to attract a point-to-point airline, but Christchurch airport paid millions to attract Air Asia X (Christchurch to Kuala Lumpur), with no conditions; it lasted only 9 months and the airline didn’t repay any of the money (it’s now resumed NZ flights, but from AKL). Some university sources say it’s incorrect that international students prefer cities with international airports; most overseas students come from cities that don’t have international links, so they’re used to internal flights. Extending the runway is not a silver bullet towards economic success. Wellington would be better to spend (say) $10m promoting Wellington or providing redemption incentives; perhaps a joint deal with Star Alliance & its frequent flyer scheme. Aviation, like all transport, is on the cusp of huge change with lighter and more fuel-efficient aeroplanes being developed. Build it and they will come’ is not a valid argument for spending so much money – especially when it is ratepayers’ money.
17. Please list three initiatives or projects you would support to improve public transport in Wellington.

**Jo Coughlan**

Urgently solve congestion on roads and double tunnel the Terrace and Mt Victoria tunnels – public transport, electric cars, buses and bikes need roads too.

- Electric buses – although this is a regional government responsibility
- Help facilitate infrastructure for electric cars.

**Andy Foster**

In the immediate term it is mostly about buses. GWRC has trains well in hand. LRT may come later with population growth and when eventually there is a change in Government. Bus priority (lanes & lights) to address congestion points affecting reliability across the city. Working with GWRC on their implementation of their new bus routes, operators, timetables, and hopefully a fully electric bus fleet. We are working with them on interchanges too. I’ll work with GWRC to investigate the potential of a new station at Churton Park-Glenside to support the growing populations in our northern suburbs.

**Keith Johnson**

As previously stated, I propose the participatory negotiation of a multi-interest / multi-modal 25-year horizon Transport Accord, using a co-design approach. I envisage that this will result in an agreed approach to developing the State Highway 1 corridor from the Terrace Tunnel to the Airport; substantial traffic calming and pedestrianization in the CBD; and the continued development of a network of cycle-ways. I could also lead to initial planning for a rapid transit – light rail link from Wellington Railway Station to the Airport (in the meantime emphasis would be given to improving the service quality and environmental characteristics of bus services). I have written and recommended a ‘Swiss-style’ bus service which involves buses running at 10 minute intervals on all major routes – this is becoming more feasible with self-drive vehicles and the development of eco-friendly/electric technology. I want to see the end of big ‘cattle trucks’ and the advent of a large fleet of smaller and technologically smarter people carriers.

**Nick Leggett**

Bus Rapid Transit must be made to work. The council must be an active participant in this discussion, despite an “anti-bus” attitude that has crept into discussions recently. This is a funded project and will significantly improve the movement of people more directly from suburb to suburb and as a result will reduce bus congestion at peak times in the CBD. There could be designation of land for future Light Rail routes to prepare for such a project in a few decades. I would seek to integrate all the traffic signalling and route management between Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and NZTA. It is surprising at the lack of co-management in these areas currently. Transport, particularly public transport, will only be successful if priority is given to one mode and the different agencies responsible for the movement of people work together and overcome the various egos involved.
Justin Lester

i. Moving to a fully electric bus fleet for the next 10 years and considering implementation of a tram or light rail network thereafter.

ii. Make public transport more affordable by freezing fares at the current level for the next three years and introducing student concession fares, which exist in other university cities, to make the Capital more student friendly and to get students on public transport.

iii. Introduce integrated ticketing; which allows for free transfers between trains, buses, ferries and the differing public transport providers.

Helene Ritchie

Extend East West ferry to take commuters from the Eastern Suburbs to the CBD (as they do now from Eastbourne, Seatoun and Petone). Light rail (Central Government funded) should be investigated for the future-(as should the use of the bus tunnel for light rail). An integrated approach to open democratic transport governance and funding (some of which must be Government funding, e.g., rail).

Nicola Young

Congestion is a growing issue in Wellington. Fifty percent of vehicles in central Wellington are just trying to cross the city. If State Highway 1 was ‘cut-and-covered’ (like the Arras Tunnel) and its intersections removed, cross-city traffic would use SH1; this would remove congestion from the central city, and this would speed up public transport. It would be worth looking at getting rid of the free weekend parking, and using the funds to provide free buses to/from the CBD. Establishing a combined transport authority (including Upper Hutt, Hutt City, Porirua and Kapiti) with authority over roads and all forms of transport (including fares). Cheaper bus fares (GWRC subsidises trains more than buses); our fares are the highest in Australasia and investigate tiered pricing for the Cable Car (so tourists pay more than regulars).
18. **What initiatives or projects would you suggest to improve business resilience in the city?**

**Jo Coughlan**

Investment in electricity resilience, water resilience and broadband resilience is key. Likewise we need to complete Transmission Gully as this will allow Wellington to be linked to the rest of NZ after an emergency.

**Andy Foster**

I take this as business resilience to catastrophes. I've covered Council infrastructure above. Encourage building owners (including through legislative means) to strengthen their buildings, ideally to a higher level so that the city as a whole is more resilient. We cannot afford to have a Christchurch situation where after 5 years their CBD is far from recovered. Actively encourage businesses to be prepared with their own emergency continuity plans and supplies. We know businesses currently lag behind residents in preparation. Council actively engages with communities (businesses included) to train and plan for emergencies. Our role includes our own infrastructure which we have been working on for 25 years, supporting building owners, developing community resilience, and working with other lifeline providers. Wellington City is by far the leader in resilience preparation. We are not a fully prepare community but within 10 years I think we can be and that’s what I will work towards.

**Keith Johnson**

See my answers to Questions 15 and 19.

**Nick Leggett**

Water storage needs urgent investment. Despite the announcement, the Prince of Wales Reservoir remains without an agreement on funding. Neither CCDHB nor Treasury has agreed to co-fund the project and the council has said it won’t go ahead unless there is external funding. General emergency preparedness and recovery planning is vital. Progress is being made all the time, however, Wellington is exposed in these areas and as the capital, we have extra responsibility to prepare for a major disaster. One of our biggest risks is if Government cannot function post-event. If this eventuates and Parliament has to be shifted to Auckland, the likelihood of a return could be doubtful and this would undermine our whole economy.

**Justin Lester**

I would ensure our core infrastructure services such as transport, water and waste are resilient and that Wellington has a resilient economy via my economic plan for Wellington (see my responses to question 2). Wellington City Council has employed a Chief Resilience Officer to finalise Wellington’s Resilience Strategy, which focuses on all of these areas. The Chief Resilience Officer role is supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and incorporates international best practice.
19. **In the event of major shocks or stresses, how would you ensure business would return or stay in Wellington?**

**Jo Coughlan**

I have excellent relationships right across the political spectrum at Central Government at the highest level so I would work directly with the Prime Minister and senior ministers of the day to ensure Wellington received whatever assistance from central government it could possibly offer. I would also listen to the business sector and work in partnership with them as well on what they believe would help. In addition, ensuring we have invested in resilience policies and other transport infrastructure as per my Roadmap for Wellington is also critical. Promoting and communication a positive constructive message about Wellington would also be important.

**Andy Foster**

In terms of shocks the first place to start is to be really well prepared – physically and people-wise to minimise damage so that as many businesses as possible are able to get back to work ‘next Monday’. Wellington is miles ahead of any other city – but we are not there yet. We have a Resilience Plan being developed now (coming pre-election). One area I also expect to cover is the recovery. Christchurch has shown how challenging inter-agency relationships and insurance can be, so these need to be sorted as best possible in advance and those relationships maintained. Stresses that take time to impact are best managed through our day to day operation as a city—managing social issues, performing and diversifying as an economy, reducing environmental impacts, adaptation to emerging environmental issues.
Having low levels of debt and well-maintained infrastructure are vital to both current prosperity and resilience. I am concerned that, in the event of major natural disaster shocks [tsunami, earthquake etc.] and economic downturns [like a re-run or even greater global disruption than the 2008 Great Recession], Wellington would be unable to pick itself up, given the accumulation of debt [which stems in part from the ‘8 Big Ideas’ programme and would be much accentuated by the rash promises on capital projects that are being made by the other mayoral candidates]. Physical and Financial resilience need to run hand in hand.

There needs to be constant communication with business and the Government to ascertain need and strong advocacy for additional support or services as and when required. Pre-disaster planning is the very best way to mitigate stresses or shocks. Understanding different scenarios and co-ordinating discussions between major lifeline services, businesses and Government BEFORE a shock or stress (be it economic, diplomatic or environmental). A Mayor and council need to be across these issues and work through potential scenarios on a regular basis.

By ensuring our core infrastructure services such as transport, water and waste are resilient and that Wellington has a resilient economy based on my economic plan for Wellington (see my responses to question 2).

Depends whether it is an earthquake, a volcano reaching Wellington from, e.g., Taupo, a tsunami; a flood; a drought; sea level rise, campylobacter in the water, or a major City-wide/nationwide I.T. breakdown, climate change, sea level … etc. Depends on the shock or stress, the impact and the aftermath … but Council is crucial to getting the City moving again!

- Basic infrastructure resilience
- CBD resilience and connectivity
- Ensure there is recognition of the need for apartments in the CBD to adequately provide for emergencies
- Ensure the Central Government immediately provides funds for an adequate water supply at the hospital during an emergency.
- Plan to mitigate against sea level rise and climate change as much as we can.
- Ensure that minimising carbon emissions to the fore of all our work.

What a disastrous note to end on!
Council needs a resilience strategy to ensure businesses can be restarted quickly. We need to learn from Christchurch, where its council worked well with the private sector (the Westpac Business Hub) to get businesses restarted quickly (it was a huge marquee, where meetings could be held, companies had booths, etc.). Council would also facilitate pop-up shipping container shops, as used in Christchurch (and Shoreditch, in London).

We must not repeat Christchurch’s error, in bowling heritage buildings unnecessarily; this has removed a lot of its history and key land marks. After a major shock, Council would immediately set up a heritage committee, to assess which buildings could be kept.

Nicola Young
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