11 August 2021

Mayor Phil Goff – Media Statement 15 July 2021

Mayor Phil Goff says while Auckland Council supports the government's objectives in seeking to reform New Zealand's three waters system, it shouldn't come at the expense of accountability to the community.

"The issue at stake here is about responsiveness and accountability to the people of Auckland through their elected representatives," he says.

"We have real concerns about the governance structure proposed by the government, which would remove mechanisms currently in place to ensure that Watercare is accountable to Aucklanders, including the ability of council to determine board directors, the legislative requirement for Watercare to give effect to council's Long-term Plans and strategic direction and for its Statement of Intent to be approved by councillors.

"This means that Watercare is not simply run by some unknown board or anonymous bureaucrats but is responsive and accountable to the people of Auckland through their elected representatives.

"The current reform model effectively removes Auckland Council's governance authority and influence over about 28% of Auckland's assets and 25% of our expenditure.

"Despite the fact that 92 per cent of the assets of the new entity would come from Auckland, and Auckland would have approximately 90 per cent of the population served by the new entity, Auckland Council could have just 35 per cent of the representation in the governance of the new entity and would have no direct input into appointing its board.

"This risks creating a new water entity that is unresponsive to the communities it serves and removes our ability to ensure that Aucklanders' needs are put first," Mayor Goff says.

"We support the need for reform, for consolidation of current supply entities and the need to access higher levels of investment in infrastructure. We want to continue to work with the government to achieve the benefits of reform without losing accountability and responsiveness of a huge part of Auckland's assets."