

Ann Court

Q1. Contact Details

Name	Ann Court
What Council are you standing for?	Far North District Council
What position(s) are you standing for on the above Council?	Mayor and Councillor

Q2. What drives you to run as a candidate in the local body elections? What do you hope to achieve?

Professional governance. Councils are the largest infrastructure companies in New Zealand holding billions of dollars of public assets and yet they are run by Forrest Gump's Box of Chocolates. Elected members are not professional directors and yet are tasked with making budget and capital delivery decisions on an annual basis of hundreds of millions of precious ratepayer dollars. They need technical and professional support to thrive in this space. Concurrently elected members are not HR specialists and we see almost monthly another CEO or Council employee taking action against a sitting Council or member for some breach of employment law. We spend far too much time digging ourselves out of trouble, losing faith with the electorate and failing to deliver. I am standing to embed a technical and professional framework to enable elected members to obtain expert advice to support making the right decision in the right time for the right budget with the right procurement and deliverables. These need to be captured in the CEO's KPIs and the CEO needs to be held to account to deliver on time and on budget.

Q3. How will you support the kiwifruit industry?

If we get the basics right - the delivery of supporting infrastructure (water, roads etc) then industry will have the framework for success. Council cannot single out one specific industry such as Kiwifruit. We need to ensure our economic development arm captures the needs of all industry players right through to supporting electricity, regional interconnectivity, ports, rail, airports. Even if these are not our core business we can act in an advocacy role. We need to ensure our district plans do not hinder by stealth economic opportunity such as unworkable environmental impacts.

Q4. What will you do to support the development of seasonal worker housing, especially in rural areas?

The development of housing is not a core business of Councils and nor should it be. The district plan is the tool to enable the industry to take ownership of seasonal worker housing. This is where it needs to sit.

Q5. How will you ensure kiwifruit growers have reliable access to water, and how will you balance competing demands?

Irrigation lakes are different to potable town supply. Here in the Far North the demands do not compete nor is it anticipated that they will. We have abundance storage due to the foresight of the Crown back in the 1980's and recent investments supported by the PGF and other accelerated infrastructure funds and consent processes.

Q6. What is your stance on protecting productive horticultural land from urban sprawl and subdivision?

There is a conflict with reverse sensitivity. The district plan should seek to limit urban sprawl to serviced areas. Council can assist this via well structured and informed spatial plans. These plans coupled with development contributions policies should enable urban development in town centric locations and hinder development in productive land.

Q7. How will you improve rural road infrastructure to support the movement of produce?

That is always going to be challenging in the Far North. 2500km of network in the most geographically challenging landscape subject to tropical weather bombs. Low rate payer numbers and affordability challenges are a real presence in network upgrades. The Crown pays for 71% of all of our roading needs so we are hostage to a degree to whatever the government of the day decrees via their policy statements. We can structure our contracts to be more reactive, we can lobby and advocate for regional connectivity and access to markets. But there will not be overnight improvements in rural roads. It would be disingenuous of any candidate to suggest that they can wave a magic wand and the roading network will improve markedly. More traffic of heavier caliber on a fragile network with 723 bridges and large culverts (most dating back to the war) are a fact of life and will be for some time. Key arterial routes need to be fit for purpose but remote unsealed metal roads will continue to be problematic

Q8. What policies will you support to help growers adapt to climate change impacts?

We have recently adopted a resilience package which will lead our approach to climate change. This is not something that can be led by one agency. It is a whole of NZ approach including individual landowners, community organizations, local councils and the Crown.