

Appendix I
Written Responses from
Municipal Councils

Suva City Council

SUVA CITY COUNCIL

Civic Centre, Suva Fiji

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

P.O.BOX 176, SUVA.

Customer Service Free Hotline Numbers:- Dial 722 from
Vodafone/Digicel/Inkk Mobiles or Dial 0800 3301722 from
TFL Landlines. Email customerservices@scc.org.fj

FAX NO: 3302158 Website: www.suvacity.org

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:

Telephone enquiries to 3313433 Ext. 100



City of Suva



The Chairman – Honorable Viam Pillay
Social Standing Committee
Parliament House
Suva.

By: Electronic Mail

Dear Sir,

Re: Additional Information Requested

Please find attached Councils response in reference to your correspondence.

Council takes this opportunity to thank the Social Standing Committee for visiting
Council and meeting management.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Azam Khan

Chief Executive Officer (acting)

sr/AK-6

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Response to Question One

The Council as a Local Statutory Authority is empowered to promote the Health, Welfare and Convenience of its inhabitants and to manage its assets as stated in the Local Government Act [1972] Section 88. Objective is to be in within the ambit of the Local Government Act (1972). The objective spectrum is broad and requires considerable direct statutory services engagement and continuous engagement with Government Agencies for support towards urban management and development. Increase in urbanization base, including the informal sector activities has increased services demand. Council continues to review strategies and work closely with the Government Agencies to meet its obligations. In addition, the grant support provided by the Government including the establishment of the National Development Plan is supporting Council.

Response to Question Two

The Council charges \$0.24 per trip. An estimated 68,000 trips is recorded monthly. In addition, the Council has established kiosks which are rented out. The Bus fee charges has been fully subsidized by the Government in this year's budget.

Response to Question Three

- i. The list of rented properties by Council are as follows:
 - a. Civic House
 - b. Civic Tower
 - c. Victoria Memorial Hall
 - d. Olympic Pool
 - e. Albert Park
 - f. Suva Point
 - g. New Town Hall

Response to Question Four

Litter prevention officers monitor public places like streets, roads, parks, footpaths, walkways, municipal market and the bus stand areas regularly and ensure that the environment is kept clean at all times. During peak hours the officers patrol the public places to enforce the litter act. The LPO's are well trained and authorized to execute their duties and also follow up with their cases right until it reaches court. They also carry out public awareness to educate the public on issues related to litter. City Council continues to work closely with the Ministry for Environment and Waterways in addressing Litter issues from our streets.

Response to Question Five

The City Council carries out sanitary prevention health inspections from time to time. Council works closely with the Ministry for Health and Medical Services in these areas for Health awareness and during disease outbreak. The OHS inspections are under the Ministry for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. The City Council continues to clean the Public Drains in within the City. Council continues to invest in

Drain upgrade projects and has been supported in grant form through Ministry for Environment and Waterways. In the Downtown, frequent flooding is only experienced at Nubukulou Creek along Greig Street. Ministry for Environment and Waterways have assessed and will be de-silting the subject area.

Response to Question 6

The data in reference to communicable disease is collected under the supervision of Ministry of Health and Medical Services. City Council Health Inspectors are an appointee of the Central Board of Health technically and work administratively for the City Council. The Health Inspectors are paid from the Council General Fund and report to the Council administratively and for preventive Health support service including Food Safety technically work closely with the Central Board of Health. The Council Health Inspectors use Health Inspectors Monthly report form to prepare inspection report which is also discussed with Divisional Health Inspector.

The Suva Urban Area is the proclaimed City Boundary area and the Suva "Rural" and "Suva Peri-Urban" areas are the areas that appears under the Suva Sanitary proclaimed area.

The council carries out routine surveillance like mosquito larval surveys every month to gauge the density of mosquito population in the city to detect risk of outbreak of dengue fever. MOHMS notifies the council's health section of any notifiable communicable diseases within the city and health inspectors investigate and take further action. The council carries out vector control works like mosquito spraying and rat baiting when an outbreak occurs. The council is also active in the Central Division Outbreak Response Task Force which has its monthly meetings to gauge the way forward in the control of disease outbreaks and emerging diseases.

Response to Question 7

Year	No. of Ratepayers	Rates Collection		
		Current	Arrears	Total
2010	11385	10,638,612.00	2,926,172.00	13,564,784.00
2011	11388	12,482,884.00	3,105,945.00	15,588,829.00
2012	11395	14,601,346.00	3,343,163.00	17,944,509.00
2013	11395	14,776,613.00	5,526,966.00	20,303,579.00
2014	11398	15,263,635.90	2,567,986.35	17,831,622.25
2015	11398	15,252,008.13	2,929,239.43	18,181,247.56

Total rates arrears as at 31/03/2022 is \$9.1m in principal.

Total Rental Arrears are as follows:

Location	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Civic House	48,234.39	48,234.39	-	55,381.75	155,262.81	62,678.84	-
Civic Tower	56,982.72	56,982.72	7,178.75	-	251,048.92	85,016.12	10,277.17
Victoria Memorial Hall	1,361.22	2,471.25	3,066.70	5,186.70	1,821.10	8,643.38	12,978.13
Olympic Pool	1,822.50	-	146.00	-	-	-	575.00
Albert Park	-	-	-	594.45	170.00	570.00	5,403.00
Suva Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New Town Hall	3,782.50	3,030.00	3,030.00	1,500.00	20.00	20.00	1,860.00
Total	112,183.33	110,718.36	13,421.45	62,662.90	408,322.83	156,928.34	31,093.30

- a. What are the causes of the accumulation of rental arrears?

Main cause of rental accumulation has been from time to time tenants making arrangements to pay the following month. The rental in arrears are balance day adjustment figures and rental outstanding as at end of the year has been collected in the following year.

- b. What are the challenges faced in the collection of rental arrears and their method(s) of collection?

During the period of this report ending 2015 Council did not face challenges in collecting rent from properties.

- c. Has the Council conducted a survey or research on the reasons for non-payment or delayed payment of town rates?

Yes, the Council has carried out a survey which shows on average 2200 (20%) rates properties on average per year would have defaulting in rates. The dissection shows that most of the properties are residential. The non-payment of rates are either ratepayers willfully failing to pay or legal disputes over the property or short term financial hardships.

- d. What is the Council's plan to address this issue and what punitive and non – punitive measures are taken against non-complaint payers?

Encourage ratepayers to enter into weekly/quarterly/monthly arrangement and source deduction.

We have a MOU with agencies to update ratepayers detail and improve collection.

Punitive Measures taken against non-complaint ratepayers include placing of charge on freehold properties, issuing of 30 days demand notice and taking further legal action. Non punitive measures include issuing of reminder notices, reminder via phone, email, SMS or mail, not processing building plan until rates are cleared or arrangements made and clearance of debt upon settlement.

- e. How is the non-collection of full town rates impacting the service delivery of the Council?

100% collection of rates will ensure the Council will be able to invest in the upkeep of the recreational spaces that have been dedicated to the Council.

- f. Provide details of vacant lots in the municipality?

There are total of 541 vacant lots.

Response to Question Eight

The Raiwaqa [former] Market was closed in 2012 due to low occupancy. Vendors opted to sell from roadside and in 2016 Council shifted the informal vendors to another site. A Mini Market is being planned for the area.

Response to Question Nine

Since, 2006 Council has identified Asbestos at Civic Center and Suva Market. Asbestos removal training was first conducted in 2004 for the removal of Asbestos in the Suva Market roof. The second asbestos removal was carried out in 2017 for the removal of asbestos in the Civic Auditorium. The training was conducted by Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations- OHS and attended by 29 workers. The Council continues to monitor buildings and advise Ministry for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations for further actions.

Response to Question Ten

The Council continues to work together with the Suvavou Village to develop land in within the City. Discussion in certain areas of interest are on-going.

Response to Question Eleven

Awareness, complaint based trapping done as and when approval is granted by Ministry for Agriculture. Dog spaying is organized with SPCA. Given that Dog control and Licensing is under the jurisdiction of Ministry for Agriculture, the City Council continues to work closely with the Ministry for Agriculture to address Dog Control and Nuisance related issues.

Response to Question Twelve

The City Council has a total of 69 open spaces in within the City Boundary. There are 6 destination parks. These destination parks are meant for hiring and for heavy community use such as My Suva Park and Albert Park. We have suburb parks which are meant for netball, soccer and rugby games. We have pocket parks which are

small in area wise and are meant for Children or specific purpose. We also have community parks which are for multi-purpose use.

Response to Question Thirteen

Under the FRA and Municipal Council MOU, FRA has contracted Stormwater Structure (Gully Pit) Cleaning, Vegetation Control, Street Cleaning and Litter Collection to the Council on Public Streets. In addition, the Contractors manage Public Open Spaces. The cost of service is reviewed at every three years prior to calling for tenders through Public Tender. The service cost that has been calculated is seen to be satisfactory given that the people movement in within the City has been high. For instance, the Bus trips generated per month for Suva City an estimated 68,000 compared to second highest of Lautoka City being 25,000. The people movement including the weather pattern requires appropriate spending. The Council cost benefit has noted that outsourcing is more effective and efficient.

Response to Question Fourteen

Buses are checked daily for oil spillage/leakage with drip trays. Offending vehicles are advised and penalized where necessary. The introduction of new buses by operators has seen a significant reduction in oil spillage/leakage issues. Space usage is through slot times against schedules provided by LTA to ensure vehicles are standing at the station. LTA also monitors schedules and bus movements.

Response to Question Fifteen

Green Feed and Compost produced at the Municipal Market are taken by farmers for Livestock feeding and used for composting by Suva City Council.

Response to Question Sixteen

a. Arrears collection each year is approximately 14%. In 2019 there was 18% collection due to offering of interest amnesty period. The Council continues to discuss with defaulters on way forward and also take legal action. Council has established a plan that by end of the year 2023 90% ratepayers shall be active. During the Special Administrators term the rate of collection has generally improved.

b. Grievance received by the Council are through electronic mail, telephone or in person. Various department secretaries and front desk officers for specific areas receive complaints and address. The Council has received annually on average 1200 complaints. The highest on the grievance list are neighborhood disputes/nuisance such as noise nuisance, derelict vehicles left abandoned, illegal development by the neighbor, poultry farming, informal settlement, business activities causing nuisance, illegal waste water connections, septic overflow, over growth. The second highest recorded is in relation to Storm Water drainage improvements.

c. The Council now has 14 public amenities. In 2010, City Council had 9 public amenities fully operational. Grass Cutting services has been improved with now the Contractors required to maintain grass at certain level at all times rather than two required cuts per month. Rubbish Collection services has improved with the Council investing in 8 compactor trucks since 2015.

The strong partnership with Fiji Roads Authority has had Road Maintenance program enhanced and resealing of surface becoming a regular program. In partnership with Ministry for Environment and Waterways, the Council is carrying out annual drain construction or upgrade works.

As of 5 January, 2012 the Ownership of, and responsibility for, all matters pertaining to construction, maintenance and development of all roads passed to the Fiji Roads Authority pursuant to the Fiji Road Authority Decreed 2012.

d. Systematic house to house inspection of residential, commercial and industrial properties in the city area ensure Health and Hygiene are well maintained. This includes safe eateries through routine and systematic inspections of eateries to meet Food Safety standards. Systematic inspection of all public places to ensure they are free from pollution and risks to health.

Council works closely with Police and Security Forces to ensure the streets and city is safe for trading and living.

The Council has been selected by Pacific Climate Ready in partnership program where our assets are being assessed in relation to Climate proofing. Following end of study, funding programs shall be considered. We are also working closely with NDMO on Disaster Management.

The Council continues to promote micro business trading including set up of canteens and vendor trading at market places.

Council is working closely with the Ministry for Housing and Community Development and the RISE team under the Monach University to address informal settlement challenges. In addition, solid waste management collection is provided. Gender Mainstreaming support is provided internally and at trading places such as the Municipal Market.

e. The Council has submitted to Office of Auditor General 2016 to 2019 draft annual accounts. 2020 and 2021 shall be submitted before 31st July, 2022. The Council anticipates during the fiscal year 2022/23 the annual reports and annual accounts shall be at par. The Council has prepared draft annual reports for all outstanding years. The Council has further upgraded its financial system to be full IFRS and has reduced qualifications 3 from a disclaimer. The Council has on board an internal auditor who shall be having three assistants and one Risk and Compliance Officer.

Response to Question 17

- a. The developer will need to submit application in accordance with Public Health Act (1935) including National Building Code regulations and Town Planning Act (1941). Rezoning requires lodgement in accordance with the Town Planning Act (1941).
- b. The Council has inspectors who daily visit areas and ensure that illegal constructions do not take place. The Council has been issuing newsletters and meeting community representatives to raise awareness on development permit management.
- c. The Council usually takes 3 to 10 days subject to lodgement being proper and no reference required for comments such as from Director Town and Country Planning and Fiji Roads Authority. In such instances, the Council will await comments prior to further processing.
- d. Following Stop Work Notice, the developer may lodge applications for regularization if the construction is at primary stage. If a Structural Engineer is of the view that the illegal construction works requires demolition then further action is taken.

Response to Question 18

An update on the issues highlighted are as follows:

- **Market Fee and Parking Meter Revenue:** For the Municipal Market. The city council has divided the collection of stall fees into two streams as follows:
Permanent Stalls in within the Municipal market - The permanent stalls have been properly registered and the Council expects 100% collection.
Outside Casual Stalls - The outside casual stalls have been properly marked and stall allocation and collection is supervised by the Market Manager, The Council has an Internal Auditor who is responsible for carrying out spot checks and submitting reports to the Council. The finance team also frequently visits the Municipal Market to reconcile casual stall occupancy with receipts issued. The Suva City Council has further entered into an agreement with Vodafone to introduce the M-Paisa methodology of collection.

To improve the collection of cash from parking meters, the City Council has separated parking meter collection duties from the actual counting of cash. The City Council has invested in a coin sorting and counting machine to accurately record the parking meter revenue. Furthermore there had been tender done for parking bay management software system which will manage and administer all the street parking bays in the city. This proposal is before FRA

- **Vat Reconciliation** - The vat reconciliation procedure has been upgraded on 31 December 21. The City Council Finance team has established and implemented a policy of meeting FRCS staff on a quarterly basis to discuss movement and reconciliations.

- Inventory Reconciliation - The inventory reconciliation was improved as at 31st December 2019. Furthermore, the Internal Auditor is currently auditing the Inventory management system and will submit a report, including recommendations for improvement, by this quarter. The annual stock-take is now a programmed end of financial year, balanced day activity, and it includes a staff from the Office of the Auditor General.

The Council has put utmost priority to resolve all the issues for the qualification as highlighted above.

Council has delegated respective personnel to ensure that the issues highlighted in the Audit report are addressed and attended too and a monthly update report is circulated to the management. Note that we have been able to address by end of 2021 out of three, two qualification. We have progressed and hopeful by the next audit, all will be removed.

Response to Question

- Risk management Policy Framework – Our Internal auditor had prepared an Enterprise Risk Management policy framework & Internal Audit Charter which was approved by the Council in August 2021. Implementation of Enterprise Risk Management is in progress with Finance to have a Risk Register.
- Fund accounting System - The Suva City Council is only maintaining its general fund account for City Council activities within the city boundaries. Special accounts are maintained for external services including the extended solid waste management areas, Kadavu operations and Nasinu Town Council solid waste management services. The fund accounts will be discussed with the Office of the Auditor General during the 2016 audit. The Loan Rate and Street Light Fund have been closed given that the Council has no loan and street light fund obligation. The City Council is only charging a single rate to ratepayers which is General Rates.
- Refundable Deposit - This has been resolved and a separate account is kept for the refundable deposit account which has balance of \$2.18 million.

The Council has recruited an Internal Audit to strengthen the internal control functions. The Internal Auditor has mapped out an extensive audit plan for all areas to improve the internal control functions of the Council. Furthermore recruitment of Risk and compliance officer would strengthen the Council's monitoring process, reduce risk and improve compliance.

Response to Question Twenty

The main finance team has a Director Finance, Secretary to Director Finance, Assistant Financial Controller, Revenue Accountant and Team, Management Accounting Team and Debts Manager and team. The Director Finance (apart from the main finance team) supervisors Parking Meters, Information Technology and Rates Collection.

No.	OFFICER NAME	Position	Qualification	Contract
1	Kavin Rathod	Director Finance	Bachelor in Accounting & Information System - USP, Chartered Accountant - Fiji Institute of Accountants	Contract and filled
2	Maca Salauca	Secretary to Director Finance	Diploma in Business office administration - FIT, Certificate in Business Banking - FNU, Certificate in Business General - FIT	Contract
3	Sholeen Shivani Nair	Assistant Financial Controller	Bachelor in Accounting & Financial Management - USP, Chartered Accountant - Fiji Institute of Accountants	Contract and filled
4	Minu Singh	Budget Officer (acting)	Diploma in Accounting - FNU, BA in Accounting (2 units left FNU)	Contract as Assistant Rates Officer
5	Hirdesh Narayan	Management Accountant (acting) Intermediate Clerk - Expenditure Section	Fiji School Leaving Certificate - Form 6	Contract Intermediate Clerk
6	Frances Waqa	Junior Clerk - Expenditure Section under Management Accountant	Bachelor in Banking & Finance, Diploma in Banking -FNU	Contract
7	Avinesh Permal	Procurement Officer	Diploma in Procurement & Supply (in progress USP), Diploma in Business (Applied Computing) - FIT	Permanent Staff
8	Paula Lagilagi	Acting Procurement Officer	Diploma in Management, FNU Diploma in Human Resources Management, FNU	Contract
9	Jone Vatunitu	Acting Procurement Officer	Professional Diploma Business Management, USP	Contract
10	Archana Arti Singh	Revenue Accountant	Masters in Commerce - Accounting, Post graduate diploma in Accounting Bachelors of Commerce - Accounting - FNU	Permanent Staff
11	Donald Sharma	Senior Cashier - Revenue Section	Diploma in Business - Accounting - FNU, Degree in Accounting & Management (in progress)	Contract
12	Priya Mala	Contracted – Revenue Officer	Post grad in Accounting, Degree in Accounting & Economics - FNU	Contract
13	Avjeet Anand	Contracted– Revenue Officer	Diploma of Human Resources Management - USP Bachelors or Human Resources Management/IR and Public Administration. USP	Contract
14	Navneet Kishore	Manager Debt Recovery	Masters in Commerce - FNU	Contract
15	Anish Singh	Formerly Business Licensing Officer and now assisting in debts team	Diploma in Business - Accounting - FNU	Contract