

## **Council Briefing Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Wednesday, 4 December, 2019  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m.  
**Location:** Council Chamber  
Forum North, Rust Avenue  
Whangarei

**In Attendance**

Cr Shelley Deeming (Chairperson)  
Cr Gavin Benney  
Cr Vince Cocurullo  
Cr Nicholas Connop  
Cr Ken Couper  
Cr Tricia Cutforth  
Cr Phil Halse  
Cr Greg Innes  
Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai  
Cr Greg Martin  
Cr Anna Murphy  
Cr Carol Peters  
Cr Simon Reid

**Not in Attendance** Cr Jayne Golightly

**Scribe** Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

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Cr Shelley Deeming convened the briefing at 9.00 a.m.

**1. Apologies**

Cr Jayne Golightly.

**2. Reports**

**2.1 City Centre Planning - Complete Streets Masterplan**

The meeting commenced at 9:00 a.m. with Rob Forlong (Chief Executive) highlighting the importance of these plans and of Councillors thinking them through in advance. Once plans are set, he asked Councillors to please stick to specific decisions that have been made and be consistent so that ad hoc decisions do not detract from the thrust of the plan.

It was requested that information be provided earlier for briefings and Mr Forlong acknowledged this but said this was a briefing and not the last chance to make decisions.

It was noted that the briefing today is to give the four new councillors who were not part of the process an opportunity come up to speed with the city plan so all councillors were collectively at the same point and the second session would be an opportunity for more robust debate.

Sonya Seutter (Senior Strategic Planner) and Mark Seakins (Roading Consultant) presented an overview of the Whangarei City Centre Plan, the City Core Precinct Plan and the initial stages of work on the Whangarei Complete Streets Masterplan.

### **Whangarei City Centre Plan**

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- Is the city core the same area as the CBD zone? Ms Seutter responded there had been different opinions and they had tried to take it up around the CBD zone.
- It was thought that Hundertwasser was in the zone.
- It was critical that there must be linkage to the Long Term Plan.
- There was a comment that the plan was pushed through quite quickly without councillors' input.

### **City Core Precinct Plan**

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- Bank Street community engagement was discussed and that, at the business workshop, general business thought it was a good idea to make Bank Street a clearway. However, there are about 30-35 business along the street who want people to be able to stop and shop. It should be noted there are different perspectives to moderate and different views to be aware of.
- There had been a good response to the workshop from business and it was an open opportunity for them to raise views.
- It was felt that councillors need to make sure people are aware of meetings and attend them. Further workshops and further engagement are planned, and skills need to be honed up to get people along to meetings and to play a role.
- There was some discussion around Council's commercial property portfolio and commercial development. Mr Kula said a number of different proposals and options had been brought forward for council to consider and would be discussed at next week's briefing.

- Cycleway connections were discussed and Ms Seutter said there is plenty of opportunity now and there would definitely be something in this plan.
- The bylaw stating no cycling and skateboarding in the CBD was discussed as this would have to go to consultation.
- Mr Seakins said they were looking at possibly three routes which go through the city and these will be covered in more detail at the next briefing. The Chair said that once the three options are closer to being detailed, councillors would like to see them.
- There were queries around car parking in the Rose/Vine Street section and Ms Seutter said they see that as being a car parking building or a new development with car parking options and explained these were visions or opportunities which would not necessarily happen unless the need for them was “triggered”.

### **Complete Streets Masterplan**

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- There was a need to be aware of businesses in the middle of town who need trucks and trailers to deliver goods. Also buses who need to cross the white line when turning. Mr Seakins advised that all these issues are being looked at, including trucks and buses.
- Climate change was discussed and Ms Seutter advised this is ongoing and there will be more discussion on this later but there is funding in the latter part of the Long Term Plan for climate change. Mr Kula advised climate change runs through all of council’s planning.
- The blue/green strategy was discussed as it provides answers and it would be good if that could be brought forward. The blue/green strategy also looks towards flood mitigation and climate change considerations.
- There was comment that there needs to be some discussion around the detail of linking the core to the waterfront.
- It was important that trees are the appropriate ones and in the right place.
- Traffic jamming was discussed and Mr Seakins said this was being looked at presently with surveys and modelling and tweaking to allow traffic to flow better.
- It was commented that there needs to be caution around narrowing streets because of allowing room for trucks.

### **Street Typologies**

Ms Seutter said they had tried to look at all the issues with modelling to improve traffic flow and some changes to the streets are needed. Mr Kula

wanted to highlight that councillors had worked through four options for streets and this was based on what was proposed at the workshop session.

### **Vehicle Movement**

Mr Seakins said they are looking at the future and each intersection. In terms of the main CBD triangle, the proposal is to drop the speed down to 30km/hr. This would be a pedestrian-friendly space and enable businesses to operate with people walking around.

### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- There was a query around the new bus stop at Walton Street and Mr Seakins advised this was indicative only.
- There was discussion around an extra pedestrian crossing, walking path, bus stop and traffic lights and whether traffic would still flow. Mr Seakins said, at the moment, they are working on current flows and the next stage will be the future and show whether this is a viable option but the modelling needs to be done. Mr Kula said feedback has been taken from previous sessions and it is work in progress.
- It was agreed collectively that the future direction is for increased pedestrians.
- It was felt we are at a crossroads in city history and making a choice whether we want to have a bigger and busier highway, or do we want to decide people have another option. It was a perfect time to decide on multi-modal transport which was safer, friendlier and more attractive.
- There was discussion around installing traffic lights in preference to roundabouts. Also, that it was important to get agreement of basic principles and that is to encourage more walking/pedestrian and not around car use.
- It was also important to ensure the Town Basin area and CBD are connected and integrated. The importance of Dent Street was mentioned and how to connect up these two areas and to look at other options.
- Vine Street and Rathbone Street are so important, how can these two areas be connected, and other options looked at.
- Vine Street and Rathbone Street work well as they are for vehicle movements.
- A free bus to the city centre was discussed.
- There was a query whether the discussion had sunk down to a lower level and it was the councillor's job to set the strategy of what was wanted and the council staff to deliver. There is a need for a pedestrian friendly city and also for the traffic to flow.

- There was more discussion around adding too many traffic lights which caused traffic congestion.
- It was necessary to provide parking and flow for both cars and pedestrians to encourage people to shop in the city.
- Mr Seakins advised that Dent Street traffic had dropped by half since Te Matau a Pohe bridge opened and there was an opportunity to look at the future of Dent Street and its intersections.
- In response to a question, Mr Seakins advised they were looking at an underpass as an option under Dent Street.
- There would be discussion at the next briefing on pedestrianizing the CBD.

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 and reconvened at 10:48.

## **2.2 Strategy Updates**

Tony Horton (Manager – Strategy) introduced Alicia Lawrie (Strategic Urban Designer) and said the purpose of the presentation was to provide strategic updates for the Draft Whangarei District Growth Strategy, Spatial Planning and Four Waters and advised there would be a follow-up session in one week's time. As there was quite a bit of information, the presentation had been broken into sections and there would be an opportunity for Councillor's feedback and questions after each section.

### **Background: What is the Growth Strategy?**

Mr Horton said it was necessary to understand how much the district was going to grow by, what that meant in terms of housing and business and if we have the capacity to do that work. A document needed to be produced advising when and how that will be provided and this led to the development of a new draft growth strategy. Mr Horton said this had been presented to the previous council in July, had been put on hold and was now being brought back to Council today.

### **Public consultation and feedback**

Mr Horton explained the key issues raised in the submissions.

### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- There's a need to look at spatial planning and organisational capacity in terms of the whole district. Mr Horton said there would be some slides covering this later in the presentation.
- Climate change would be major in terms of what is coming through and will impact mapping of natural assets.
- Affordable housing was queried and what tools there are to provide that. Mr Horton said they will touch on some of that later but it's a very difficult issue work out what is a response. He said not enough

housing is being built which inflates price but there are many more issues to housing affordability.

- The balance between housing issues and intensification of greenfield developments was discussed and the need to relate it back to the spatial planning issues.

### **Central Government reform**

Some key policy statements were listed which Mr Horton talked through in more detail and what they would mean for Whangarei District Council.

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- It was queried how, after going out to consultation, Council would explain how the plans which had been put together will change. Mr Horton advised they would respond with three points:
  - Council went into the consultation process being quite clear there could be changes.
  - There is strategically not that great a misalignment to where our strategy thinking was at the time of consultation.
  - A lot of policy statements in terms of implementation will fall to regional planning and the community will be able to engage at that level.
- Mr Horton said that the plans align with the direction that Central Government is talking about, Central Government just want it done differently.

### **Proposed Changes to the Draft Strategy**

Mr Horton ran through these at a high level.

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- Referring to highly productive soils and that, if a piece of land was not suitable for horticulture, you were able to use it for housing and this worked really well.

### **Spatial Planning Programme**

Mr Horton acknowledged the work Ms Lawrie had undertaken and explained the programme at a high level. He covered the Preliminary Traffic Light Analysis but advised it will be talked through in more detail at the next session.

#### **Questions/Comments from Councillors**

- Stormwater issues were discussed and the capabilities in areas where the existing network would be intensified. Mr Horton said they would come back in more detail.

- Issues with spatial planning were discussed and how to get in before the population grows in order to start planning before a development commences. Mr Horton said they would respond to this next week. It was felt the criteria set is reactive rather than proactive in this regard.

At 11:45 Simon Weston (General Manager – Infrastructure) presented an update on the Three Waters review by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the Government's response to the Havelock North Inquiry.

### **Background**

Mr Weston talked about the background to the Cabinet Paper released 25 October 2019 and that the DIA were expecting to put news on their website before Christmas. Mr Weston said he would keep councillors informed but he was interested in their thoughts for the next step and, as it was a large topic, suggested it was discussed further at one of the briefings after the Infrastructure meeting.

### **3. Closure of Meeting**

The meeting concluded at 12:09