

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 12 March, 2020
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

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

Not in Attendance Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Jayne Golightly

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

Crs Benney, Cutforth and Golightly.

2. Reports

2.1 Cobham Oval - Carpark upgrade

Cr Martin convened the meeting at 10:30 and handed over to Ms Shelley Wharton (Manager – Infrastructure Planning and Capital Works) in the absence of Ms Sue Hodge (Manager Parks & Recreation). Ms Wharton said the purpose of the briefing is to update the Council on the progress of the Cobham Oval Carpark upgrade project.

The concept design is looking at the gravel carpark areas between Port Road and Okara Drive next to Cobham Oval. The Council project team met with stakeholders to work out their requirements, how they use this area during events and the pedestrian flow through the carpark to provide safe areas where people can walk to events.

Ms Wharton said the concept design has been driven by the necessity to maximise the number of car parks and to provide sufficient space for large trucks to come in and set up for events. The concept design also covers the provision of accessible parking, electric vehicle charging and water quality treatment. Car parks are for normal sized vehicles with no dedicated spaces planned for freedom camping. Provision will be made for water and power for events to be run from that space.

Hawthorn and Geddes have been engaged to prepare the detailed design and are still working through the detail and investigating the site which has been identified as a HAIL site with contamination.

Ms Wharton outlined the plans attached to the agenda which showed the pedestrian flow around the carpark split into two zones, landscaping provided round the edges in concept with gardens and trees and the continuity of design throughout.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- In response to a query around the number of car parks, Ms Wharton said there were a few less than required by the resource consent so they will be applying for a variation to the resource consent.
- Accessibility car parks were also discussed and the need for them to be as close as practicable to the entrance. Ms Wharton said she would check that the total requirement for accessible spaces is being met and whether they could be in a different location without losing spaces.
- There was discussion around freedom campers and whether they could come in at night and leave early morning so as not to compromise the car parking. Ms Wharton said freedom campers are not being prohibited but bigger sized car parks are not being provided to accommodate them.
- Bicycle racks should be provided for locking up.
- There should be enough space for buses to come in and turn around.
- Regarding budget, there was \$833,000 in the LTP which was brought forward to this financial year but Ms Wharton said they would not be able to move into construction this financial year so the money will be pushed out again. However, the project has started into the design stage and around \$1.7 or \$1.8m will probably need to finish to the standard required. Mr Weston hoped that in the next couple of months

they would be in a position to lock in this project and the amount of money required.

- The contour of the land and the height differential was discussed. Ms Wharton said they did not know yet how much material would be moved, the amount will come through in the detailed process but, being a HAIL site, excess material will have to be disposed of in a secure landfill.
- Ms Wharton confirmed that, due to carparks having contaminated stormwater run-off, water quality treatment will be provided for these areas.
- She also confirmed there will be two entry/exit points to the carpark and it would meet standards for a commercial entrance.
- There was discussion around who had control of the area at the moment and Ms Wharton said NEC and Cobham Oval have rights in their leases to use the carpark for events and the Parks and Recreation department take bookings.

Mr Weston thanked Elected Members for their comments and input and said more information will be brought back on this strategic project.

The presentation on Cobham Oval – Carpark upgrade concluded at 10:54.

2.2 Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project Update

Ms Wharton said the purpose of this briefing was to update Elected Members on the upgrade project which was put into the Annual Plan to provide additional bus and visitors facilities at the Town Basin. Ms Wharton said she would digress from the agenda to give an update on what staff have been doing to understand the impact of visitors and the cruise industry coming to Whangarei. She advised that staff were having to move quite quickly now.

The presentation covered:

Cruise Research and Findings – included feedback from discussions with various operators and other New Zealand cities experiences of the cruise industry. Dunedin is of a similar size to Whangarei and research was undertaken on what they have set up and how they operate. Dunedin had an action plan to improve their offerings and quality of services. The slide also covered how the passengers are split up, the experiences they are looking for and facilities required such as public toilets, i-Site and mini-van type tours from the Town Basin.

Cruise and Visitor Preparations – multiple agencies are working together on an action plan including WDC, Northport, Northland Inc., Chamber of

Commerce and Ritchies Buses. It is planned to have markets running on the days the ships are in port and various other entertainments.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- Ms Wharton advised that it is yet to be determined who will be taking a lead on the co-ordination, but it will probably be between i-Site and Venues and Events at this point (and they will certainly take the lead internally). Mr Weston mentioned that Northland Inc would be presenting to Council shortly.
- There was discussion around lack of communication with the Bream Bay area and Northport as Council was not aware that there was a cruise ship booking so soon. Mr Weston agreed that discussion around this could continue “off-line”.
- The traffic management plan and what it would entail was discussed. Ms Wharton said there are a number of different ways visitors will come into town, including 12 Ritchies buses carrying visitors between the ship and Town Basin throughout the day. This will need to be managed along with the normal daily traffic, pre-booked tour buses and mini-van tours. Ms Wharton said visitor numbers were hard to quantify at this time, but this would be worked through the same as any other traffic management plan.
- Ms Wharton confirmed that the timing of roadworks had been checked on.
- In response to a query, Ms Wharton noted that the Hihiaua Cultural Centre was not on IDNZ’s list of places to visit at this time.

Ms Wharton continued with the presentation:

Whangarei Town Basin Projects 2018-2021 – there are a lot of projects underway with co-ordination between project managers and designers to ensure the timing works out.

\$5.2m New Town Basin Park Project open by June 2021 – construction has been delayed due to work on the Hundertwasser Arts Centre who are using the carpark as their construction area. It is anticipated construction will start between June and August this year.

\$30m Hundertwasser Art Centre with Wairau Maori art Gallery open July 2021 – this is still on track.

\$0.9m Ball Clock Project open by October 2020 – is currently being constructed and there are discussions around where to place it, so it works in with everything else happening in that space.

\$0.87m Town Basin Playground & Pedestrian Area Renewals open by October 2020 – Tracey Moore (Senior Landscape Architect – Infrastructure Planning and Capital Works) gave an overview to Elected Members and outlined changes to the playground which had quite a different design, although the climbing net will remain. Ms Moore said they had gone out to consultation and there had been comments about safety issues. A raised area with a balustrade is planned and also to make the Hatea Loop wider in that area. Part of the consultation process with other organisations was to look at making the playground more inclusive so that a lot of the equipment can be used by children of different abilities.

Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project Background – Ms Wharton gave an outline of the background.

Dent Street & Reyburn House Lane – this was a concept design option after going through the process of looking at all the other options and surrounding plans. Different stakeholders were spoken to as to what would work in the area. There were also discussions with Claphams Clock Museum about the challenges they have in their space. Ms Wharton said there are issues with the Lower Dent Street public toilets due to drainage. She said a lot of time had been spent understanding the different elements of the project and incorporating solutions. The playground construction will start in late April and take four to five months to complete so when the first cruise ship comes in June, the playground will be closed.

Isthmus consultants were engaged to undertake a feasibility study which included the development of assessment criteria that have been used to come up with a preferred option. There will still be a traffic management plan in place for cruise ship days.

Within the master plan there is a strong connection along Dent Street for pedestrian flow and if people are parking or getting off buses, they are looking at preferred routes they will take through the Town Basin. Ms Wharton said there are a number of issues in the way the Town Basin interacts with Dent Street and they want to improve this as much as possible.

The New Town Basin Park will have a number of paths from the city and Canopy Bridge, with the main flow along the Hatea Loop, and Hundertwasser want people to be guided round to the front entrance. The project will make sure people have opportunities to go to all the shops and cafes along the way. The building will be extended to provide public toilets and incorporate the i-Site into that area.

The buses that come into that area will be guided out through the Reyburn House Lane exit, where speed bumps will ensure they travel slowly, but there needs to be some reconfiguration of the carpark to ensure traffic movement is safe.

The current service lane which runs to the back of The Quay and the Marina Office poses a hazard to children and Hatea Loop users and controlled access will be provided by Reyburn House Lane. There is also potential for delivery vehicles to park and goods to be walked to the restaurants.

The toilets will be closer to the playground which will be safer and also closer to the Hatea Loop.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- In response to a query about the bay where The Quay and other business put their waste, Ms Wharton responded they are working with businesses on how they can reduce their waste and a solution for an alternative location. She confirmed there would still be marina access on that road, but it would be controlled.
- Ms Wharton confirmed there would be a traffic management plan in place, which will be monitored and adjusted as required.
- There was discussion around the number of carparks and Ms Wharton confirmed that the current number of carparks by The Bach would remain. Disabled car parking and access was discussed, together with the service lane being used by boaties for loading and offloading. Mr Mike Hibbert (Commercial Portfolio Manager – District Development) said meetings were being held with Town Basin tenants to discuss the location of the new playground and the effect of access to the rubbish enclosure and service vehicles. He said this can be used as a temporary measure to test the final solutions.
- There are dedicated marina parking spaces for permit holders further along at Finlayson Street carpark, but none at the Town Basin.
- Safety concerns were raised about buses moving through the carparking area, even if just for a short time. Ms Wharton said a wide variety of options had been looked at and there is not enough space within other areas to accommodate the number of buses needed. She said this is a much safer design than the current situation where buses, cars and children are all moving in the same space. Ms Moore said at the moment anyone can walk through the carpark to get to the playground and this design will have a central pedestrian accessway which is providing a better option than the current one.
- Ms Wharton said the next step of the City Centre Plan is a Waterfront Precinct Plan which can address a lot of surroundings matters later this year. She said this is something we have to move with now to get ready for buses and cruise ships.
- In relation to the New Town Basin Park project Ms Wharton confirmed that the closure of the carpark next to the Canopy Bridge had been planned for many years and more information will be put out to the

community closer to the time. The carpark will close between June and August and the communication will remind people of alternative car parks and that public transport is available.

- In response to a query about sheltered areas in the playground, Ms Wharton said there will be shade provided.

Ms Wharton explained the next steps and said an update would be provided at the monthly meeting. Mr Weston added that there can be a debrief after the arrival of the first cruise ship.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 12:03 p.m.