

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 6 May, 2020
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting Room

In Attendance

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

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Advisor)

1. Apologies

Cr Gavin Benney apologised (early departure).

2. Reports

2.1 Strategic Update

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting at 09:00 a.m.

Presentations on three strategic updates would be provided and there would be an opportunity at the end of each section for elected member feedback and questions.

Placemaking

Her Worship handed over to Mr Tony Horton (Manager – Strategy) who stated that the main purpose today is to provide Elected Members with an update on progress made on the various programmes and, in the light of COVID-19, some information around how that has impacted both the work on the

programme and also on thinking around outcomes of plans and strategies and the more constrained ability to deliver these programmes.

Ms Alicia Lawrie (Strategic Urban Designer) and Ms Injoo Reihl (Strategic Planner) went through the presentation on the Placemaking Programme.

The Placemaking Programme (originally known as Spatial Planning) will link back to the key outcomes and issues identified in the Growth Strategy. Ms Lawrie gave an overview of how the programme had developed since the decision to start the programme in Tikipunga and Hikurangi was made at the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee meeting on 20 February 2020. Since then, development of the plan has continued and it is envisaged that the plan be taken to the community for engagement. The plans will be used to create a positive message of looking to the future aiding in the recovery of these communities following COVID-19 lockdown.

The presentation detailed the integrated plans which are referred to as the Tikipunga Plan and the Hikurangi Plan. The planning drivers will be combined to become a 20/30 year shared vision. Ms Lawrie said it is important to manage expectations about when they will be implemented and how they are achieved. Ms Lawrie explained the importance of what will and what will not be covered in the plans and the medium to long term actions.

The overarching strategy for the district, in the form of the Growth Strategy, is at a district-wide level and there is currently a gap as to what these things mean to a community at the space specific level.

There is a three-stage approach to the placemaking programme process which Ms Lawrie explained would be collaborative with engagement in the form of internal workshops and with the community throughout the process. Both the Tikipunga and Hikurangi plans would be conducted in unison with one another over a 12 month period.

Ms Lawrie said we are currently in Step 1 of the programme and collaboration is the key to these projects. The programme was introduced to key stakeholders and community groups in early March prior to lockdown and had met with positive community response. The momentum has been maintained around these projects, keeping everyone up to date on how things are changing during the COVID-19 lockdown. Understanding communities experience of their place will help to inform strategic direction of the plans going forward and in developing the plans.

Ms Lawrie handed the presentation over to Ms Reihl who covered the effects of COVID-19 which occurred early on in the process and therefore the effects to timing are minimal.

In summing up, Mr Horton stated that the main area that has changed is community engagement. Discussions with Elected Members around this

programme emphasised the importance of community input and they were looking for some comfort from Elected Members on the approach to have confidence in going forward to the community with the Hikurangi and Tikipunga plans.

Her Worship said the key point is that council is now consulting on the Annual Plan which takes priority and Elected Members need to be mindful of the change in focus in the short term.

Comments and questions from Elected Members covered the following points:

- The 20–30 year time frame was queried and Ms Reihl confirmed this is a horizon with short and medium term actions.
- The importance of a consistent line of command.
- Engagement with Maori was discussed and Ms Lawrie responded that all these meetings have stopped during this time but they will work through the best way to engage with the Maori communities of Hikurangi and Tikipunga and then go through more formal channels.
- Engagement and communication with key business stakeholders in Hikurangi and Pehiaweri Marae.
- Connection with older Pakeha who do not use social media.
- Involvement of central government as they are wanting to take a social profile. Mr Horton responded they have some key contacts within various government agencies who have been informed of the programme being undertaken. He said the challenge is understand the key areas where government agencies may be interested, including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development who will be a key agency to see what outcomes can be delivered at a local level.
- This is a huge body of work and the committee which is set up needs to be resourced appropriately.

Her Worship said it was encouraging that work was continuing with the two communities of Hikurangi and Tikipunga and all methods of communication and connecting with communities need to be looked at.

Mr Horton said he was pleased with the feedback received and that Elected Members would be updated on progress with this ongoing programme of work through operational reports to the Strategic, Planning and Development Committee and also through council briefings.

Climate Change

Ms Bernadette Aperahama (Senior Strategic Planner) took Elected Members through a detailed presentation on Climate Change and provided an update on a number of matters relating to climate change and council's Climate Change Action Plan.

The presentation covered:

- Central government RMA Reform Update
- Our climate change work to date
 - Adaptation
 - Mitigation
 - Action Plan
- Next steps

Ms Aperahama said central government has committed to improving our approach and gave a summary of the RMA Reform and the proposed Climate Change Amendments.

The presentation illustrated the differences between mitigation and adaptation and she explained the changes will have different aspects in the climate action plan and the realms of work for Whangarei.

The four Northland councils are working together to develop a regionally consistent approach to climate change and to work with communities to apply those. In February, a series of risk assessment workshops were held for council staff, hapu and iwi representatives and information is being collated at the moment.

Ms Aperahama outlined the GIS tool to use online, the regionwide coastal flood hazard assessment and the Te Ao Maori Framework and clarified this is regional work so there are representatives, including iwi, from other districts.

There are two main areas of work underway in the district which are the Climate Change Gaps Analysis and preparing for the 2021-31 Long Term Plan and Elected Members were briefed on the proposed approach to the Action Plan in February.

COVID-19 has disrupted council's ability to progress this action plan, due to the difficulty in engaging with internal and external stakeholders. Ms Aperahama outlined a suite of outcomes which have been identified and the proposed structure of the action plan to achieve them in both mitigation and adaptation areas. There is a suite of actions sitting with internal action owners for the first round of review, with priority ones for each sector with respective staff for review.

Ms Aperahama said resourcing of the Climate change Action Plan is a key consideration, even more so in light of COVID-19, and indicative costs are being developed by staff to support discussion around resourcing and budgets.

She outlined the Action Plan for the district and said the next steps will be to work through policy direction and action with staff, hapu and key contacts and

bring a draft to Council for further feedback with details of costs, benefits and implementation requirements.

Comments and questions from Elected Members covered the following points:

- How effective is WDC within the regional Climate Adaptation Te Tai Tokerau forum? Ms Aperahama advised that our district plan policy team is working with district plan policy teams across the region as well as with regional councils to ensure that there is a provision in the WDC district plan to achieve the teams' timing requirements in terms of central government's expectations. Staff are working on this and there is a full suite of tools to work with. Councils are committed to working together and using the same data.
- Will there be further opportunities to workshop this with Council? Ms Aperahama responded that groups needed to go back to their respective councils and Elected Members to make sure that whatever staff are proposing works for that district and that our Elected Members are comfortable with that approach. Responses would not proceed without being worked through with Elected Members.
- There was a query around no mention being made of economic effects, social effects, food production, employment effects and the cost to the community of implementing the plan. Ms Aperahama agreed that it was necessary to engage widely and some of the plans in place cover all sections of the community which can be different for local government. She said the next step is to obtain further information from staff and then to go out to the broader community. Advice from Elected Members on who staff should engage with would be appreciated.
- In order to move forward with this, is staff resourcing or governance leadership more critical? Ms Aperahama responded that leadership always starts from the top. Decision making is about embedding this from the top down and across everything we do. She said strong leadership is needed and, even for low cost options, staff with the skill set and time are needed to drive these. In addition, some of the actions are around working with industry and those who provide services to us and our procurement ability to bulk buy at a good deal (for example rain tanks and electric bikes). Staff are trying to manage this at the same time as their other work.
- It was felt that the outcomes should be more clearly described.
- There was discussion around a developing farming sector who have a lot of knowledge about how to improve the biodiversity and build the soil sponge to provide economic development and new skill sets. Ms Aperahama said there are action plans to propose that the economic development team spend time with farmers and research development organisations in Whangarei.

- In response to a query about the strategy to engage with farmers, Ms Aperahama said, before COVID-19, they had aspirations of leveraging the relationships at key sector contacts with the farming industry, Portland Cement and Fonterra but had not had an opportunity to do that at the moment. She said they would very much appreciate the support of Elected Members to be able to contact those they might know in key sectors.
- It was felt that COVID-19 has given an opportunity to do the reset economically and give a real acknowledgement to the land based industries importance going forward. It was also an opportunity to put 'clean green' into practice.
- Ms Aperahama confirmed they have been engaging with Northland Inc and said they would be one of the many teams they needed to be connecting with.
- Ms Aperahama was asked if she would struggle to handle a task of this size with the resources she currently has. She responded that under current resourcing staff will definitely struggle and there is a need for resources to drive this work and commit time to process the actions. She said there was an opportunity to merge a lot of this work with the other three councils within the region.
- Ms Aperahama was asked how close the collaboration was with Northland Regional Council and the other two district councils and she responded that collaboration is very tight and they are having conversations all the time. She said all staff feel positive about working more closely across the region.
- There was discussion around bulk buying of water tanks and solar panels and whether Civil Defence could be involved in this as it related to emergency response. Ms Aperahama said in terms of the action plan council has the ability to enable homeowners, marae and those who operate commercial buildings to build their own resilience and were in a better place to support this.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 and reconvened at 11:00 when Her Worship handed over to Mr Horton to introduce the presentation on Growth Strategy.

Growth Strategy

Mr Horton said this is a significant programme of work which Elected Members would be familiar with from the three briefings held in December. He said the programme was driven by two key elements which were that Growth Strategy 30/50 is reaching its tenth year and it was always intended to do a full review at that point and produce a new document and the second is from a government policy perspective.

Ms Reihl recapped the objectives of the growth strategy which sets out Council's response to manage and guide growth for the next 30 years. She outlined the engagement process and said 66 submissions had been received last year.

The scope was highlighted and Ms Reihl covered what is new, what is not new and what the strategy will do and will not do. Ms Reihl said COVID-19 will have significant impact on the district in the short term but the severity and duration of those impacts is not certain. She explained the key issues to think about over a 30 year strategy and said, with these issues and resulting changes to the Growth Strategy, Council may wish to seek further community input through a second round of consultation.

Mr Hamish Sykes (Graduate Strategic Planner) discussed the Strategic Drivers, covering the key issues, sustained growth and a successful economy broken down by industry. He discussed housing which reflected the population trend and the demands and challenges around housing.

Mr Sykes talked about Climate Change and natural hazards. He then covered transport choice which would be aligned to future growth.

The Growth Strategy plays a key role in the alignment of the planned growth and infrastructure needs of the community and Mr Sykes highlighted the challenges.

Mr Sykes discussed the expanding Northport and Navy base.

Mr Horton advised that a decision paper is due in July, but it is not known what impact COVID-19 will have on this or what the priorities are within central government but the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development will provide details on how Council can be part of the programme. He said there is a collaborative effort across local government, central government and the community including iwi and hapu.

The next steps are to revisit the project timeline based on uncertainties around government policies and COVID-19. Another briefing would be held at the end of June for the draft Strategy to be shared with Elected Members to receive feedback on a second round of engagement with the community as a lot has changed since they had been spoken to in May last year. If required, a second round of public engagement will take place in August. The project timeline covered a series of meetings and briefings with Elected Members.

Comments and questions from Elected Members covered the following points:

- There was a query around the projected population growth and the need to project correctly to meet with the demand. Mr Horton responded that, in terms of growth, the impact of COVID-19 and particularly the economic recovery presented challenges in terms of future population projections

which staff are working through. It is anticipated that immigration rates will fall considerably over the next few years and they are looking at what that means for the growth numbers. He said it is a 30 year strategy and they need to be thinking long term, that numbers will bounce back but it is a question of what these numbers will reach. Mr Horton said it is necessary to plan for growth and ensure the planning infrastructure mechanisms are in place to drive that growth. He said we do not want to be a position of potentially oversupplying, particularly infrastructure, for a development that will not occur for a long period time. Building consents have interesting statistics and Mr Horton suspects it will drop significantly again this year and possibly into next and one of the problems the council faces are spikes in dates so there have to be robust processes to accommodate those spikes. Concern was raised that if the figures are projecting low growth this puts things like our hospital on a low level for regrading and it could be better to project higher numbers for central government to see a high growth projection.

- There was a question whether analysis had been done to see if GDP could be lifted in Northland and what that would mean and how it would drive our decision making. What tools did we have to drive growth? Mr Horton responded this could be challenging and started by saying the frameworking being used in terms of national legislation and policy is very much focused on growth happening, not necessarily looking at levers to create growth. He said there are potentially some levers we could pull to make our district more attractive to growth and the COVID-19 response strategy addresses those. Growth strategy has key actions which relate to initiatives which will make our district more attractive. He said the Port would be a very tangible action that could be taken by central government that we could support and would provide growth and GDP.
- In response to a comment about a second round of public engagement, Mr Horton said there is certainly a great deal of merit in a second round of community consultation. He said there have been some significant changes which have been reflected in the draft strategy, so it is not same document we consulted on last year, but the process has to be considered and how it feeds into the Long Term Plan. Mr Horton said the timing looks favourable and that is a key direction they will be seeking when the draft is shared with Elected Members.
- It was commented that the Spatial corridor plan is seen as quite critical going forward as it engages with central government and looks towards substantial central government funding. Mr Horton was asked if there was any discussion around councillors being involved in those discussions, similar to Kaipara Moana working party. Mr Horton said this had certainly been raised with officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development who are currently working through it. The Hamilton to

Auckland corridor plan already had a political forum established. He said feedback at officer level is that there is a need for governance level oversight but he does not have details on what it looks like yet.

- It was mentioned that, going forward, there are a lot of unknowns and it is important to have a good monitoring programme and reporting back to council so Elected Members fully understand what is happening and have flexibility to be able to change.
- Mr Horton was asked what written commitment there was from central government that the Port or Navy will move. Mr Horton responded that, from the Port perspective, the only commitment from central government is that they will look at the port location and they acknowledge there are constraints with the current location in Auckland but there is no commitment to move to Whangarei. The decision is likely to be delayed due to COVID-19 and they have not confirmed whether it will be a post-election decision.
- Infrastructure and the roading network needs were discussed and the need to continue with core infrastructure.

Her Worship noted the comments around the timeline and the potential for a second round of public engagement prior to adoption of the strategy as people who had engaged with council in the first round would want to provide feedback. Mr Horton agreed and said they had a comprehensive list of stakeholders and submitters from the first round of consultation undertaken last year and one of the tools they will be using is to contact them if Elected Members want to go down that route.

Mr Dominic Kula (General Manager – Strategy and Democracy) stated that there will be some tough decisions and there are pertinent points around the need for resourcing and connecting with communities. Analysis and costings on those will be brought back to Elected Members.

3. Closure of meeting

The briefing concluded at 12:00 p.m.