

## **Council Briefing Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Wednesday, 8 July, 2020  
**Time:** 9:00 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 Tricia Cutforth  
Cr Phil Halse  
Cr Greg Martin  
Cr Anna Murphy  
Cr Carol Peters  
Cr Simon Reid

**Not in Attendance**

Cr Gavin Benney  
Cr Ken Couper  
Cr Shelley Deeming  
Cr Jayne Golightly  
Cr Greg Innes

**Scribe** Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

---

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Crs Gavin Benney, Ken Couper, Shelley Deeming, Jayne Golightly and Greg Innes. Apologies for late arrival were received from Cr Carol Peters.

Her Worship the Mayor welcomed members of the public to the briefing and advised that no decisions are made at Council briefings, the purpose of which is for Elected Members to get information from staff and to provide feedback on various topics for a decision to be made at the Council meeting itself.

Mr Dominic Kula (General Manager – Strategy and Democracy) said both agenda items being discussed have a bylaw policy position in terms of Class 4 and both have strong interest from the community and stakeholders. He said the role of staff is to bring the best information to Elected Members to

encourage strong discussion and debate to get clarity and understand what the community will be consulted on.

## **2.1 Camping in Public Places**

Mr Tony Horton (Manager – Strategy) handed over to Ms Vita Strohush (Strategic Planner – Bylaws) who covered the purpose of the briefing and highlighted problems that have accumulated. She said there had been 1,300 responses from a survey conducted on freedom camping from 2 – 22 June 2020 and today's presentation would go through the issues laid out in the report. She would also propose a timeline and ask for input from Elected Members.

Ms Strohush touched on the constraints, what the current bylaw can do and the issues analysis which covered both perceived and demonstrated issues. She then highlighted the aggregated enforcement instances and CRM complaints which had been received.

The purpose of the freedom camping survey was to get a snapshot of public perception and Ms Strohush outlined the limitations from the survey data. She said a high level of public engagement was expected during consultation and that support of local campgrounds was an emerging issue.

The issues analysis is a time to consider what the future might hold and what the changes and drivers are going forward as the bylaw could last ten years until the next review. Permanently living in a vehicle is not “camping” for the purposes of the bylaw and an agency approach is used for people who are genuinely homeless.

Ms Strohush explained the bylaw review timeline, leading to the adoption of the reviewed camping in Public Places bylaw in February 2021.

### *Questions and comments from Elected Members:*

Her Worship said staff had identified that the Camping in Public Places bylaw could be brought forward for review to address some issues that have been brought up. She said the data that has been presented is impressive and gives Elected Members a sense of what to compare and to see whether the future is in line with today's presentation.

The survey was discussed at length and issues around freedom camping were discussed with the following points raised:

- Impact on commercial campgrounds, where people could easily camp there and travel to beaches.
- People who are affected, such as coastal, should be surveyed.
- With online submissions, could it be identified where they came from and whether they were locals who might have a different view.

- Her Worship said the consultation process will generate a lot of opportunity for that feedback. Ms Strohush said Elected Members will be receiving an operational report from Health and Bylaws next week and they did stress that the online survey was just a survey and not consultation. She said local councils received an email invitation to comment on the survey. In terms of whether they were comments from locals or visitors, Ms Strohush said they did not know but when they went to formal consultation they will definitely see whether it is local people.
- How accurately could the survey data be relied upon? Mr Horton said, whilst they acknowledge it is not robust statutory consultation, the number of responses and variety in 400 written responses gave a good indication.
- Can the bylaw protect businesses that might be in the area? Mr Horton responded that Council's ability is limited and protection does not include commercial – the protecting area normally means environment, not business.
- The objectives have to be balanced, with people being concerned but also wanting to see more visitors.
- Do you limit areas or go with a liberal approach which may spread the issue across the district? Urban based freedom camping may be a more appropriate way to manage it.
- Post Covid-19 there will be less international visitors but more New Zealanders, including people who may choose to live in camper vans and travel around for economic or lifestyle reasons.
- Homeless people who live in cars are different to freedom campers and more work needs to be done on that. Ms Strohush said that permanent living in a vehicle is a separate issue.
- Ms Strohush was asked if they knew what proportion of freedom campers were international and what were domestic. She said they do not have that information as the Campermate app only captures those who are using the app. She said during lockdown there was a snapshot which showed a mixture of international and domestic freedom campers and Health and Bylaws would have more information available around this at policy time.
- A lot of the CRM complaints are from the people who do not like freedom campers.
- Sites could be made available at centres which were not booked out for community events to create safe camping sites, with freedom campers paying a small amount to support the community.
- Use should be made of apps and the iSite to inform campers about rubbish and recycling information. More places should be made

available, but make sure the infrastructure and environment is looked after.

- You can't have a bylaw without an enforcement arm to it.

Mr Reiner Mussle (Manager – Health and Bylaws) said the operational report next week would answer a lot of the questions from today and that financial pressures dictate less of an enforcement programme.

The presentation concluded at 10:21 and Her Worship adjourned the briefing which was reconvened at 10:37.

## **2.2 Report back on Class-4 Gambling**

Mr Tony Horton (Manager – Strategy) presented the Report back on Class 4 Gambling, after which there was discussion between Elected Members. Her Worship the Mayor requested the briefing be deferred for when all councillors were present to have an opportunity to join in the discussion.

## **3. Closure of Meeting**

The briefing concluded at 11:10.