

## **Council Briefing Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Thursday, 10 December, 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 Tricia Cutforth  
Cr Shelley Deeming  
Cr Jayne Golightly  
Cr Greg Innes  
Cr Greg Martin  
Cr Anna Murphy  
Cr Carol Peters  
Cr Simon Reid

**Not in Attendance**

Cr Gavin Benney  
Cr Phil Halse

**Scribe** Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

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### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Crs Benney and Halse.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 10:45 and handed over to Ms Sue Hodge (Manager – Parks & Recreation) for the presentation.

### **2. Reports**

#### **2.1 Management of Public Tree Policy**

Ms Hodge said this was an opportunity for Elected Members to review and give feedback on the Management of Public Trees Policy prior to it being formally received at the next Infrastructure Committee meeting.

She said Parks work really closely with Infrastructure but there is conflict between developing and maintaining roads, and footpaths and trees. Trees are just as important as infrastructure and there are times when a tree is the centre for discussion between departments. Trees are valued and developers are encouraged to put trees into new developments.

Ms Hodge said the current policy doesn't reflect what the district wants in terms of planning and gave Elected Members an overview

She explained Notable and Public trees and said the policy was about trees on public property and that private property was not covered. Street trees provide many benefits, they are protected by the District Plan and Parks work with colleagues to get good cost effective outcomes.

### **Elected members feedback and discussion included:**

- Public tree removal and concern that council would not remove a tree until it causes a problem (for example with stormwater), or when it should not have been planted in that area.  
Ms Hodge said there was a 50/50 division between tree-lovers and those who were not. Council does not start by saying a tree is the problem but looks at all the alternative options before removing a tree. She said when assets are damaged by a tree and need repair, they try and balance it to get the cost right. Sometimes a tree will need to be cut down but they don't start with that position, the policy is just for guidance and departments work together.
- Ms Hodge said she would look at the wording around the criteria for an inappropriate tree which was causing damage or impacting on council services.
- It was felt that a balance of rules and guidelines was good for community led projects, such as weed action and the stages of planting the right trees in the right place.
- Ms Hodge confirmed that new trees are covered in the policy as well as ones that are already growing.
- There was discussion around trees on council owned property which were too close to the road. Ms Hodge said in the beginning of the policy there was more focus on the 50kph areas, although trees in the rural zone may need some trimming back. She said Council would rarely approve the planting of trees close to a road but it might be private property owners who have planted it, or a weed species that has grown.  
Ms Hodge said some wording could be included around what was acceptable to council with guidance from the roading team about distance.
- Ms Hodge was questioned about the necessity to have an arborist on site for trimming operations and she responded that Council is often the overseeing arborist and will provide overall guidance.

- There was discussion around the public being allowed to plant trees on road reserves without the permission of council and Ms Hodge said she can put something in the policy to make it clear that permission of Parks or Roading managers is needed before planting trees.
- Ms Hodge was asked about preserving heritage stone walls and she responded that it is about balancing the difference of values again but she can put some wording into the policy.
- It was suggested that there could be more specification under “Policy Provisions”, with examples of native and non-native trees. Ms Hodge said they wanted a balance between trees, for example, Jacarandas are beautiful to give colour in the city but native trees were preferred on esplanade areas.
- Her Worship said, given this is a briefing, it can be escalated to a council meeting for approval of the policy and today was important to cover off things our community will be interested in and looking for. Ms Hodge said once the policy is adopted they could do a media release to remind and educate the community on some of the issues.
- There was comment that it was a good policy which was mostly operational and whether it could go to a higher level as there were lots of social benefits. There was a need to look at tree coverage across the district. Trees play a role in mental health and wellbeing.
- Responding to a question around fruit trees, Ms Hodge said Council does not actively plant fruit trees but are supportive of communities who want them either on street frontage or in parks. She said they would be happy to include this in the policy with some guidance.
- Concern was raised about labelling trees as pest species in the policy and Ms Hodge responded that NRC decide what is a pest and over time opinions change.
- There are guidelines in the engineering standards for removing trees around roads and intersections before they grow too big. Mr Calvin Thomas (General Manager – Northland Transportation Alliance) said they can give advice and that most of the planting on state highways is done through the resourcing process and a landscaping plan is required. He was not sure about the rural areas.
- Ms Hodge was asked about smaller sections and the intensification of public planting in those areas which will become more important in developing neighbourhoods. She responded that they have a policy for community gardens. She was asked if this could be referenced in the policy and if a risk matrix could also be included.
- In response to a question about tree damage and whether there are any prosecution or infringement mechanisms for this, Ms Hodge said the Reserve Act can be used, but this is a long process. It is a much simpler

process und the RMA and is under the umbrella of the District Plan to enforce any action.

- Ms Hodge said there is a data base to keep track of trees and their maintenance and well over 10,000 were planted last year. The Policy is specifically written for parks and roads and other trees are managed under the District Plan. They feed in together but Ms Hodge said this Policy is about how we manage our park and road trees.
- Climate change was discussed and also the need to ensure safety to public so that growing trees do no obscure security cameras.

Ms Hodge said the Policy will come back to the Infrastructure Committee once the feedback has been included.

## **2.2 Oakura Wetlands community project**

Ms Hodge gave Elected Members an update on the consenting costs for the Oakura wetland community project. She said it had taken a while to get a consultant who could help with the project, but a smaller engineering company in Auckland had a look to see what the community is trying to achieve.

She asked for feedback whether there was any support for putting up a report at the next Infrastructure Committee meeting or to advise the community to looking for funding providers.

### **Elected members feedback and discussion included:**

- There was general support for the project and that it has been ongoing for 15 – 20 years and there were people in the community who could do the work but had no finance available.
- There were benefits for stormwater and improving the whole ecological function of that area.
- Ms Hodge was asked if the project qualified for council grants through community funding as it was important to follow the correct process and encourage external funding. She responded that there is probably up to \$10,000 available through grants and that they would need resource consent before they can apply for funding

## **2.3 Draft Infrastructure Strategy Briefing**

Ms Sarah Irwin (Team Leader – Infrastructure Planning) and Ms Lynne Dahl (Team Leader – Development Contributions) were in attendance for this presentation.

Mr Simon Weston (General Manager – Infrastructure) said input had been received from all the different parts of Council and he ran through the Draft Infrastructure Strategy, advising Elected Members it was a rough draft and refinement would be undertaken.

He said this is a high level document which feeds into the LTP process and is a linkage between other plans and strategies. It covers everything associated with infrastructure, transportation and park reserves.

Mr Weston covered where we are and said the draft needs to be formatted and tables inserted which they are busy populating.

**Elected members feedback and discussion included:**

- It was queried whether, due to 3 Waters, more emphasis should be placed on stormwater as we could expect a level of subsidy to come to these major projects.
- Mr Weston responded that a lot of previous funding had been introduced. Mr Simon Charles (Manager – Waste and Drainage) said there was a lot more emphasis and focus on water treatment and quality. He said in terms of infrastructure upgrade, there is still a lot of modelling work being done and that 3 Waters was difficult to extricate from roading and other infrastructure.
- Mr Weston was asked about Stage 2 of the Hikurangi Swamp project and he responded that when it was first built there was a Stage 2 but it had never been raised since. He would contact the regional council to follow up.
- Poroti was discussed and Mr Weston said they were mindful of the consenting and this was another reason they have funding in for a potential new dam.
- There was a query about ring roads around the city and upgrading or 4-laning of Maunu Road and Ms Irwin responded that the Onerahi bypass is in as an option for Riverside Road and some of the other 4-laning is covered in the major programming table.

Ms Dahl continued the presentation which covered the Development Contributions Policy.

She said the document is largely unchanged from last time and noted that the project schedules will be updated in the final document. Charges are different from other councils as there are specific projects being done in Whangarei which do not match other councils. Ms Dahl said growth has had a very real effect on charges and she ran through the updated draft charges and asked Elected Members for their feedback on capping.

- There was support for capping as this made it fairer across the district and does not prevent progress. Ms Dahl was asked, if a call was made on capping, whether this would be done through the LTP consultation and she responded they would want to have an indication and then explore that option.
- Ms Dahl was asked if about the boundaries for the catchments and she said they are in the policy.

- Ms Dahl was asked about the Whangarei Heads wastewater capping and she responded that it is based on the average cost of an up to date onsite solution and there is no disincentive to connect

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

The meeting concluded at 12:29.