

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 9 February, 2021
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

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 Martin
Cr Anna Murphy

Not in Attendance Cr Greg Innes
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Crs Greg Innes, Carol Peters and Simon Reid.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 10:30 and welcomed members of the public before handing over to Ms Vita Strohush (Strategic Planner – Bylaws) to commence the presentation which would:

- report on the feedback received through consultation on the proposed amended Camping in Public Places Bylaw; and
- provide Elected Members with an overview of draft staff recommendations, based on analysis of submissions received against the requirements of the legislation.

2. Reports

2.1 Freedom Camping Consultation Update

Ms Strohush covered the consultation activities and said the feedback had been collated and analysed separately for location-specific submissions. Submissions are received on numerous general matters around seasonal restrictions, self-containment and out of scope requests.

Whilst Attachment 1 of the agenda covered the area-specific feedback, Ms Strohush said she would like to look specifically at Whananaki North which received most of the feedback and she is looking for feedback from Elected Members on the proposed option.

She outlined the submissions requesting further restrictions or prohibitions and the options shown in the Statement of Proposal. The analysis against the legislation found that there is not enough enforcement data to justify a full prohibition on camping or a peak season ban in response to submissions. NRC monitor the area and advise that the site is generally low for contamination and is safe to swim.

Referring to Otamure Bay, Ms Strohush said it was proposed to expand the prohibited area all the way to the beach to provide more uniform regulation and access to the beach was already controlled by a DoC operated gate.

She explained the Statement of Proposal for Ocean Beach and said that Parks and Recreation were supportive of this change.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Ms Strohush was asked if any work had been done on permanent vehicle dwelling sites and she responded this was outside the scope of the bylaw review and would be covered by Health and Bylaws.
- It was noted that the submissions for Whananaki North were anti-camping and Ms Strohush was asked why tents were still being included when the DoC campsite was just down the road. Ms Strohush confirmed that the preferred option is to bring this into general rule (not on any schedule) which would eliminate the ability for people to tent.
- It was suggested that if there is no dumping station nearby, it might be more suitable to limit camper vans to one night instead of three.
- In response to Lake Waro not being included, Ms Strohush advised it will be looked at when working on the Hikurangi Placemaking programme. It was more appropriate not to designate it as a site as the site is close to a wahi tapu area and access is controlled by a gate which is locked overnight and could cause safety problems. Under general rule it is not a prohibited site and, although it is not advertised, self-contained vehicles can park overnight.

- Ms Strohush said, regarding Ocean Beach car park, they had been advised by enforcement that it was best to have the campers in one area.
- There was discussion around whether it was time to consider changing the name of the Camping in Public Places bylaw. It was felt this might be confusing but, when looking at the terminology everyone one is using and when searching on the computer, freedom camping is the first name that appears. Ms Strohush said on a national level, councils have been using the term Responsible Freedom Camping Bylaw.
- Ms Strohush was asked if vehicles had to be certified self-contained or could just be self-contained and she read the definition clause from the bylaw. She was asked if this would relate to others, such as fishermen, and hikers so that individuals were not singled out, but these issues were outside of the freedom camping bylaw.
- Ms Strohush was asked if the name of the bylaw was used in signage and Mr Tony Horton (Manager – Strategy) advised some signs will have to be changed anyway to reflect the updated bylaw so there would be some cost to updating the signage regardless.
- As there were so many submissions for Whananaki North, it was asked if there was an option to close it completely. There has to be strong evidence of environmental concerns or complaints to justify restrictions for prohibited sites and Whananaki North did not meet that criteria.
- When asked about submissions for seasonal restrictions, Ms Strohush said there was a lot more support for seasonal restrictions and they are included in Attachment 1 to the agenda in relation to each specific designated site.

Mr Kula summed up and said a reasonably clear direction had been set by Elected Members from the briefing and asked that Ms Strohush be advised of any further expectations.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 11:14.