

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 11 March, 2021
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance

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

Not in Attendance

Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Ken Couper

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Crs Benney and Couper.

Item 2.6 was taken first on the agenda. Items 2.4 and 2.5 were taken after the meeting reconvened at 15:07.

Cr Martin convened the meeting at 11:30 and handed over to Mr Simon Weston (General Manager – Infrastructure) to begin the presentation on the Whangarei Airport Location Option Study.

2. Reports

2.1 Management of Public Trees Policy

Ms Sue Hodge (Manager – Parks and Recreation) said feedback received from the workshop at the end of last year had been added to the Management

of Public Trees Policy for Elected Members to review prior to going to Council in March to be adopted.

Ms Hodge went through the changes to see if there was any further feedback.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Ms Hodge was asked about trees growing through power lines and she responded that Council takes responsibility for trimming trees in a five-year cycle, to keep them safe and in shape. However, if Northpower give us a Cut to Trim notice we will respond if they are in a 50 kph area but, if not, it is the responsibility of property owner. She said the Plan Change puts restriction on maintenance or removal of trees.
- Ms Hodge confirmed that the District Plan identifies the notifiable trees and said a comment can be put in the policy to advise this. There is a link in the Public Trees Policy to the notifiable trees.
- Responding to a question around a specific policy for replacing trees when they are cut down, Ms Hodge said they do more than replacing one for one and gave Parihaka as an example where more than 2,000 trees have been planted. Whenever funds are available, more trees are planted and green field developments generally have street trees as part of the development.
- Her Worship said there will be great public interest when this comes to the Council meeting so it is important to make it clear these are public trees located on public land and that, hopefully, any gaps have been spotted.
- Removal of Wilding Pines was discussed and Ms Hodge said they had received \$40,000 from NRC to address this and after 30 June they will ask NRC for more funding for their removal.
- There was concern that it was too easy to remove trees for a sub-division and Ms Hodge said resource consent would be needed to remove a public tree.
- Ms Hodge was asked whether trees or infrastructure would have preference and she responded that both are considered as infrastructure and departments work together to do a case study to get the best overall outcome for everyone.

2.2 Marsden Maritime Holdings - Easement Request

Ms Sarah Irwin (Team Leader – Infrastructure Planning) said a request had been received for an easement across a public reserve, containing the Marsden Marina boat ramp and car park to facilitate access to a loading bay for a supermarket on an adjacent site.

This application for an easement will be brought to Council for a decision on whether it should be granted or not.

There was concern that it is hard for boat users to access this ramp because of overcrowding and Ms Irwin said this is one of the issues that has to be considered when the request comes to Council

2.3 Port Road and Kioreroa Road Intersection and Bridge Upgrade

Mr Jeff Devine (Strategy and Planning Manager, NTA) gave a brief update on the project and timeline. He said the process has been fast tracked as there are deadlines to meet and explained the slides in the presentation which showed the designs that are available, together with the services location and geotechnical investigations.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- There was discussion around the pedestrian crossing, Mr Devine said the project would be an entrance feature to the town.
- The intersection was discussed and Mr Devine said the marina is outside the extent of this project. The design of the intersection is dictated by Kiwirail as the railway has to be kept clear of vehicles at all times when they have a train coming through. Mr Devine has been talking to Mr Mike Hibbert (Commercial Portfolio Manager) in relation to the future use of the Balance site and are endeavouring to have little impact on the plans regarding the esplanade.
- Mr Devine confirmed the cycleway on Kioreroa Road is on the right hand side of the road, heading towards the sea, but they are still working on the detail on the design of this and the roundabout.
- In response to a question, Mr Devine confirmed Kiwirail at this stage are happy with the roundabout rather than traffic lights but they are going through the detail design and modelling to make sure that if it is signalised the roundabout meets NZTA safety requirements. He said they are trying to promote the roundabout but is positive they will get a good solution from the two parties.
- Her Worship said there is also the open land to consider as well as Kiwirail and NZTA and Mr Devine responded that they are allowing for both – a cycleway down the road in a safe environment but also plans for a coastal walkway.

The briefing adjourned at 12:30 for lunch to reconvene after the Confidential Workshop presentation scheduled for 1.00 pm.

2.4 Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project Update - March 2021

Ms Shelley Wharton (Manager - Infrastructure Planning and Capital Works) gave an overview of the agenda and commenced the presentation which

included updates on waterfront facilities and the project to update bus and visitor facilities at the Town Basin.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Ms Wharton said a possible alternate plan for buses coming from the south is for them to drive via Kioreroa Road to the Te Matau a Pohe for a sense of arrival, then along the waterfront on Riverside. This would need to be implemented.
- Ms Wharton noted that from works done so far for Finlayson Street, there is enough room for buses to turn around there.
- It was agreed that the bus parking area in the Town Basin car park is a health and safety issue, with buses having to reverse to leave the car park.
- There are five bus bays in total, two of which are beside Clapham's Clocks and are a health and safety concern. Up to three buses can be accommodated along Dent Street, but this is not sufficient for the amount of buses expected in the future.
- Ms Wharton noted that making it easier for the public to move across roads is important and Council need to make sure they are not undermining the masterplan.
- In a response to a question about buses going past the playground, Ms Wharton said the plan was to manage the buses, not stop them. There is also potential to look at a five minute drop-off zone near the playground, for parents with children.
- It was suggested that the project could be delayed as the plan was made pre-Covid-19 and accounted for cruise ship arrivals and more tourist buses.
- Her Worship said that relocating the public toilets is a priority and, while the timing and decision-making drivers may have changed, she supports the plan. She noted that today's plans are not a final design and this has been taken into account.
- It was suggested to take a step back to think about the plan further, rather than spending the Central Government subsidy, just because it is on offer, whilst another comment was that the Central Government subsidy was too large an amount of money to say no to.
- In response to a question, Ms Wharton said it is not possible to have bus parks on roadside sections of the car park as this would remove car parks and trees would need to be removed. She also noted the shape of the roundabout would make this difficult.

2.5 Three Waters DIA Request for Information Update - March 2021

Ms Wharton gave an overview of the agenda and provided the following feedback and update:

- Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) and Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) provided feedback on Whangarei's RFI, with SOLGM noting that WDC was a star performer in the response.
- Whilst it normally takes five to six months to complete the RFI process, WDC completed it in three months over the Christmas period.
- Overall Performance Assessment (OPA) score for Whangarei is 110 points. Best in NZ is Watercare on 150 points. Whangarei sits in the top quartile in NZ, so are doing quite well.
- Whangarei has a 140% higher cost per head of connected population which can largely be attributed to challenging geography.
- Nationwide issue of depreciation being undervalued by about half, meaning asset replacement investment is insufficient by about half.
- WICS analysis of Net Present Cost per connected citizen included four scenarios. This shows at the low end \$650 using LTP expenditure, \$850 adding WICS analysis of depreciation, \$1,700 - \$2,130 adding high end of investment in upgrades and growth, and \$1,400 - \$1,720 adjusted for sensitivity analysis (minus 25%) to reflect low end of likely required investment in upgrades and growth.
- Whangarei annual asset replacement costs are estimated to be between \$60 million and \$75 million per year by 2050.
- Whangarei's Three Waters investment would need to be around \$1.1 billion to \$2 billion over the next 30 years (depending on methodology used).
- More information on Special Factors has been requested and will be submitted by 16 March.
- WDC has been encouraged to continue collecting the RFI information on an ongoing basis to inform business decisions.
- DIA suggests all councils making the RFI publicly available should anyone request it.
- WICS will report to DIA in approximately 3 weeks' time on their analysis and findings to inform next steps of the DIA Three Waters Reform process.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- In response to a question, Ms Wharton advised Council currently spends \$30 million on Three Waters, but the amount fluctuates significantly when large projects are delivered such as the Whau Valley Water Treatment Plant.
- Mr Forlong confirmed that WDC can exit the Three Waters reform programme with more advice to come and the possibility this organization will not accept the government reform programme. He said it was most crucial for central government to have Auckland Council accept the reform programme, not WDC.

2.6 Whangarei Airport Location Option Study Briefing - March 2021

Mr Weston said the purpose of the briefing was to provide background information and to update Elected Members on the Whangarei Airport Location Option Study project. He explained the Study Phase 1 and went through the key elements of the Onerahi and Port Nikau assessments.

He highlighted the project objectives and the 5 main categories which have been used for the criteria for this particular project, which are:

- Aeronautical
- Environmental
- Cultural
- Social
- Economic

Mr Weston covered the Project Methodology Overview Phase 2 and the infrastructure requirements. They had culled 31 sites to a long list and half of these did not comply with CIA requirements and other issues identified through the five categories to get to a shortlist of sites.

Two locations were identified for the short list, with an additional location south of the city.

Two external groups were included in the project, including Te Karearea who appreciated being involved when the project was started. The project group involved a wide net of stakeholders including NRC, NZTA, various ministries and Air New Zealand.

Mr Weston continued the presentation which covered property assessment, comments from AIAL Chairman and NZ Airports Association Chief Executive and discussions with Air NZ staff. He covered the economic development contribution and the suggested staged process.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Referring to the runway length comparison with Kerikeri, Mr Weston was asked if there was a single airport location for Northland, would we still be progressing this for Whangarei. Mr Weston responded this was part of the study and would need to be revisited on a regular basis as it was not a foregone conclusion there would always be two airports in Northland.
- Mr Weston was asked what conversations had been held with Central Government as funding of an airport is beyond our ratepayers and regional ratepayers. He responded that Mr Forlong had been to Wellington and tried to get funding through the Provincial Growth Fund and also to the Minister of Transport to push for a national strategy for aviation which would be a key

feature in the strategy. Unfortunately staff change regularly at the Ministry in Wellington and when they leave you have to go back to stage one again. Mr Weston said that Central Government may have the view that it is too far out and once we get to the point of preferred location and consent, that would be the right time to do a business case and push hard to get Central Government support.

- Mr Weston was asked if there had been constructive discussion with Central Government and he responded they have been supportive but not to the point of writing a cheque.
- Mr Weston was asked about the future for Onerahi if in time the airport location was moved. He responded that the land is owned by the Crown. Mr Forlong said if the land was deemed to be surplus he expected there will be a request to landbank. Her Worship added that the Onerahi community would obviously be interested in the outcome for the land. Mr Forlong said until quite recently the Ministry of Transport had kept out of ports, airports and rail and largely focused on roads. They are trying to get together an integrated strategy, but he expected it could be a year or two away.
- There was a comment around the purpose of the airport – whether it was a commercial or tourist focus and it was necessary to have thoughts around what is best for the district.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 16:03.