

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 10 June, 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 Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 10:32, with apologies for a late start, and handed over to Mr Calvin Thomas (General Manager NTA).

2. Reports

2.1 NTA Transportation Activity Update

Mr Thomas introduced Mr Aram Goes – NTA Maintenance & Operations Manager (employed by Far North District Council) and said the purpose of the briefing today was to give Elected Members an update on Whangarei District Transportation activities delivered through the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) for the first nine months of the current financial year.

Mr Thomas gave further details and examples on the following topics which were covered in the agenda:

- NTA deliverables, Vision and Values
- Financials
- Asset Management & Strategy
- Development Applications
- Capital Works & Procurement
- Seal Extension Programme update
- MBIE Worker Redeployment programme – Transport items
- Maintenance & Operations
- Customer Interactions

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Mr Thomas and his team were thanked by Elected Members for their work and responses.
- *Why was there a change in the office environment?*
Mr Thomas said Waka Kotahi had moved out of Walton Plaza as there had been new recruitment across both organisations and there was not room to accommodate the NTA team and Waka Kotahi in the same office, with the current intent for Waka Kotahi to re-join the NTA when all move into the new Civic Centre.
- *What is the structure of an unsealed road?*
Mr Goes said the structure below is retained with a larger stone size and then smaller, 'muddier looking' material is put on top. He confirmed there are no additives, it is a naturally occurring product obtained from quarries.
- *Would this method work on corrugations?*
Mr Goes said it does reduce the speed at which corrugation develops but corrugation is a challenging space. Even on sealed roads corrugation can occur on tight corners. The premise is that these take longer to develop and it reduces future maintenance costs.
Mr Thomas said the key thing is that part of the work being done is to change methodology to a more programmed approach to capital works on unsealed roads. This means moving to targeting those roads that need it most and looking at water tables, drainage and other things but it does mean that money does not go as far.
- *What percentage of budget is directly due to the increased safety aspect of working on the roads, including trucks and the people involved in safety?*
Mr Thomas responded that this is dependent on the task but around 20% to 30% relates to safety although for larger projects that reduces, with medium projects being the vital ones. They are working with some of their bigger partners to improve efficiency in that space and look at how some of the administrative components can be reduced. It is a high risk trust

environment and they have to ensure the quality of the traffic is aligned with what is required for worker and road user safety.

- There was further discussion around safety and the monetary value that goes into safety and other things rather than physical work on roads. Mr Thomas said they are currently finalising a maintenance achievement report within the operational report. This has about 20 key activities reporting on actual quantities achieved for the month which will show what is being achieved against the long run average.

In response to a question whether there would be a time when traffic management was pulled out of the roading budget and run by a separate organisation, Mr Thomas stated that if this did eventuate he did not believe it would result in any additional funding, but from reduced funding in other areas.

- The sealing programme was discussed and Mr Thomas said they needed to support council LTPs and work on priorities at the same time and, in future, they would look to put programmes forward at the start of the LTP programme. When the capital works programme of 100% based on the year, this is not likely to be achieved as things fall off. He said they are looking at coming to council with a three-year sealing programme and where possible to allow some flexibility in that programme to target the quick wins.
- Mr Thomas was asked about development engineering in sub divisions and whether there was a level of flexibility for staff at pre application meetings. He responded that Council's involvement is as a technical expert and they tend to look at things in terms of compliance with the District Plan, engineering standards and the Land Transport Act. In some cases they are stuck regarding the level of flexibility they can provide as Waka Kotahi are strict on councils ensuring consistency in sub division approvals so that they are not setting up a high cost for maintenance in the future. There is constrained flexibility to fit the desires of the community and the wider costs of how much it costs to maintain.
- The development of the hospital was discussed and Mr Thomas said they are engaging with the District Health Board and Waka Kotahi but he does not know the terms of the future solution around the traffic assessment of that area or what the resource consent is.

Mr Forlong confirmed that the government has provided certain exemptions for the resource consent to Waka Kotahi.

- There was discussion around the NTA model and Mr Thomas said one constraint of the current model is that NTA is not a CCO entity and there is a duplication of processes and systems. At the moment this is the solution agreed on by all four partner Councils to support regional collaboration noting one of the original key non-negotiables was for each Council to maintain full control of their assets and budgets.

Where possible, NTA are currently working to amalgamate systems into a regional system with each council owner managing that. There are currently home council finance, email and CRM systems but there is now a common NTA Office365 environment providing centralised document storage to collaborate across councils which is a massive step forward. They are seeking collaboration, not amalgamation and have been able to progress in some areas across NTA but they are still dependent on technology solutions provided by each council .

Responding to a question Mr Forlong said there if the model was reviewed all four councils would need to agree and these work arounds are necessary to retain complete control of bottom line requirements. To gain maximum efficiencies it would have to be turned into a CCO-type entity and then you would have the equivalent of Watercare with a board of directors.

- Mr Thomas was asked if he thought there would be more cuts in projects and he responded that a number of the capital works projects will need revisiting in terms of justifying. It has recently been reported that MBIE have pulled back nearly \$1 billion of original funding as projects were either under-funded or under-scoped. In some cases there are projects which have been justified but will not be funded in government policies.

Her Worship the Mayor thanked Mr Thomas and his team and said Elected Members looked forward to quarterly updates from now on.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 11:43.