

## **Council Briefing Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Thursday, 8 July, 2021**

**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 Phil Halse**

**Cr Greg Innes**

**Cr Greg Martin**

**Cr Simon Reid**

### **Not in Attendance**

**Cr Gavin Benney**

**Cr Anna Murphy**

**Cr Carol Peters**

### **Scribe**

**Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)**

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## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Crs Benney, Murphy and Peters.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting at 10:30 and handed over to Mr Simon Charles (Manager Waste and Drainage) and Ms Vita Strohush (Strategic Planner – Bylaws Strategy).

## **2. Reports**

### **2.1 Trade Waste Bylaw (Statement of Proposal)**

Mr Charles said this was part of the bylaw process but this bylaw was being brought forward by a year. He gave a summary of the proposed changes which were discussed at the meeting with Elected Members in April. These were:

- The Physical and Chemical Characteristic Schedules to the Bylaw are to be removed as they are primarily technical items that do not need to form part of the Bylaw
- amendment to clause 6.4.3 of the Bylaw allowing Council to set by resolution a preferred waste tracking system
- improvements in drafting and wording of the Bylaw and reorganisation of the definitions table
- applying the revised Council logo's and colour formatting.

Mr Charles explained the attachments and referred to Page 27 of the agenda where some other considerations had come to light around Te mana o te wai and the discharge of mortuary wastewater into the public wastewater system. He said this won't affect the Trade Waste Bylaw as it is dealt with under the Wastewater Bylaw.

Her Worship requested this was highlighted in the Statement of Proposal as it would be of great interest to Maori and questions may be raised.

**Elected members feedback and discussion included:**

- There was discussion around the problem with fat build up and concern it was not covered in the Bylaw. Mr Charles said it is included under criteria for trade waste and requirements around fat and grease traps and different consenting requirements. He gave examples of prohibited discharges which relate to public health and also protection of the public wastewater system. When Council becomes aware of issues the compliance team becomes involved and the Bylaw gives the mechanism to enforce it.
- *What is the process for our compliance with consents?* Mr Charles said the Trade Waste Officer would go out and follow up on that work to identify what is causing the blockage. This would be an operational matter for the Waste and Drainage department to manage and may be assisted by the Health and Bylaws compliance team.
- Elected Members confirmed they were all comfortable that the Policy will be adopted at the same time as the Bylaw as they go together under one adoption process.

Mr Charles was asked about the risks involved if we don't do that and he responded it would not carry the same weight as they do go together.

- *Should we be monitoring our sewerage system to identify if trade waste going into it?* Mr Weston said someone goes to a site to monitor it but online monitoring would be very expensive and you can only monitor for those things you are actually wanting to look for and other trade waste would go through unnoticed. He said it's a difficult space to operate in and has a lot of cost attached to it but he said it is a gap in the way local authorities are operating and they are trying to manage this space.

- *What about the existing consents when the new Bylaw is adopted?* Mr Charles said the existing consents will run through but no more than five years and he would need to check on them. He was requested to include this information when the Bylaw was brought back to Council for adoption as we need to know that people who will be affected will know.
- There was discussion around 3 Waters and who would be responsible for trade waste if wastewater is not controlled by local councils. Mr Weston believed it would be between the operator and the new water entity as the operator would be held accountable and may be prosecuted.
- *If we have already issued a consent, we can't curtail it if there is a change to the Bylaw.* Mr Weston said there have not been fundamentally major changes to this. The criteria for acceptances is the same so in all probability they would allow existing consents to run their full course and then issue a new one. Mr Weston was requested to look at who will be given exemption and report back at the Council meeting.

## **2.2 Nitrates and Drinking Water**

Mr Andrew Venmore (Manager Water Services) commenced the presentation to Elected Members. He explained the studies which have found an association between nitrates in drinking water supplies and colorectal cancer, the causes of nitrates in drinking water and the maximum allowable values.

Referring to the graph showing WDC water sources, Mr Venmore said it's the ground water that seems to have the highest nitrate levels and there is nothing in our dam catchments that can cause elevated nitrate levels. He said the river sources are a bit different as you can get elevated nitrate levels after heavy rain but pretty soon it washes through and comes back to normal levels quickly.

In terms of health effects, the way standards are determined you would need to drink water at high levels for it to have an effect but it depends on how the Ministry of Health would view this as to whether they would look at an average over the whole year or a single element. The new drinking water standards are yet to be determined.

Mr Venmore went through the slide covering the options for the treatment of nitrates and said the easiest one is blending sources as the other three options are quite expensive and take up quite a lot of space.

He covered the WDC treatment plants and said there is no concern at the moment and they are not planning to do any physical works but they are keeping an eye on concerns around contaminants in drinking water.

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

- Minimising fertilisers getting into waterways was discussed. Mr Venmore said it had not been a long-term concern but NRC had monitored a property and an educational programme out that way had seen a drop in groundwater nitrate levels in that area. He said it will take a while to have a positive effect.
- *How often are World Health Guidelines revised and how does it affect the limits set by the Ministry of Health?* Mr Venmore responded that there have been other studies that have decided it's not a valid concern so there are disputes between experts in this field over nitrate levels. It has not been a high priority but is something more and more people are raising.
- *What will be the timeframe if new drinking water rules come out?* Mr Venmore said new drinking water rules would require us to put specific safety catchments in place and to work closer with regional councils and that is part of the risk assessment process. Council will be given programmes which they will need to implement and to work with everyone in the sector, including landowners.
- *Since Northland has a low nitrate level, that wouldn't equate for our colon cancer rate being so high.* Mr Venmore responded that those levels are in our sources but, particularly in the rural area, they use bore water which is higher in nitrates.
- There was general discussion around nitrate levels and how the readings were taken and what caused them to rise including that they are higher around volcanic soil than clay soil.
- Mr Venmore was asked where he sees the regulator going in terms of increased standards and what their priorities would be. He said they have issued a draft of what they are looking at and there is not a lot of change in the standards themselves, but more around looking at compliance. He said the Ministry of Health will be the policy makers and working with the regulators on standards.  
Mr Venmore said council will be providing the regulator with information on a regular basis as we do now and making sure that council is meeting all the rules under the new act. He said it will be self-monitoring to a certain extent but there will be water assessors carrying out an audit process to check the information provided. They will be looking very closely at any incidences that occur round the country which have to be advised to the regulator within 24 hours.

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

The briefing concluded at 11:31.