

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 20 July, 2021
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
(Chairperson)
Cr Gavin Benney (Virtually)
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 Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Not in Attendance Cr Greg Martin

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cr Martin (absence) and Cr Golightly (early departure).

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 09:00 and welcomed Mr Andrew McKenzie (Chief Executive, Kāinga Ora) and Mr Jeff Murray (Regional Director, Kāinga Ora).

2. Reports

2.1 Kāinga Ora housing investment in Whangarei

Mr McKenzie said that Kāinga Ora was formed on 1 October 2019 and was an amalgamation of Housing New Zealand, its development subsidiary HLC

and the KiwiBuild Unit from the Ministry of Housing. He said that he would set the context before handing over to Mr Murray for his observations on planning in the area to achieve the necessary outcomes.

Mr McKenzie began the presentation which covered an overview of the Te Tai Tokerau Regional Plan and the focus for the next twelve months, including solutions for issues which specific areas are facing. He said efforts had been ramped up in the Maori area and there is a new team with specific responsibilities around legislation for Maori aspirations for housing.

Kāinga Ora's new structure has 12 regions which are formed under three groups – Auckland & Northland, Central and South Island. There are six long-term outcomes with a big shift to be vested in all of these outcomes and they have been given a lot broader mandate than Housing New Zealand.

Mr McKenzie highlighted their internal and external priorities and explained the focus of their public housing portfolio where there is a target to get these completed in the next 15 years. He said that the recent budget announcements have been quite material for Kāinga Ora and gave an overview of the current and planned housing supply and the numbers of houses that the government is looking at across New Zealand.

Mr Murray continued the presentation and covered what is currently being done in Northland, the future direction and then, more specifically, in Whangarei. A regional plan is being prepared for each region and they will be seeking feedback before finalising the plan in June 2022.

He covered the demographics of the homes and customers in Northland and the mandate to support and enable Maori housing aspirations. Building relationships with the Maori community is important to bring the public sector together and to increase Maori home ownership and the delivery of homes through Maori trusts.

Mr Murray said they are developing partnerships with Maori and Pasifika-owned businesses to increase participation in urban development and construction, including the retrofit programme to upgrade and improve some of their older homes.

Kāinga Ora wants to provide employment opportunities and have established an apprenticeship programme and partnered with a number of secondary school trades training programmes.

Mr Murray highlighted the key issues and housing affordability in Northland which is partly driven by population growth and the median income. He covered the public housing programme and the location and typology of new developments in Te Tai Tokerau and what Kāinga Ora are intending to do and are seeking feedback on.

Kāinga Ora will be approaching the challenge by looking at places over the next 12 months, where they should focus their investment within these areas and if they are the right areas.

In the Whangarei urban area, they will be looking at sites which might be good for development in line with the strategy Council is taking under their District Plan. Kāinga Ora will also continue to work where they already have homes which can be redeveloped.

Mr Murray said they are seeking a strategic and open conversation with Elected Members on investing in Whangarei. They are looking for feedback in terms of the direction to go in building apartments so they can come back at a later date with proposals.

He showed examples of apartments they have built and will come back with other examples and talk more fully so the community can see what Kāinga Ora do and how they develop their portfolio.

Mr Murray said Vinery Lane and Dent Street are the two sites which have been targeted in the CBD and it was important to highlight the benefits of these two locations which were perfect as they supported services and were close to a cycleway and schools. He said Kāinga Ora could supply good quality intensification and bring a positive perspective of development whilst existing needs, for example car parking, could be transferred elsewhere.

Mr Murray concluded the presentation by highlighting the benefits of residential intensification near jobs and services and said the question is whether these are the right sites.

Her Worship said she was sure there would be feedback from Elected Members on the proposals and Council did want to work in a partnership to solve some of the problems in housing for our people. These issues need to be faced together, where possible.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- *Some tenants in Otangarei wanted to purchase their homes, will you be offering tenants the possibility of moving into home ownership when the houses are up for intensification?*

Mr McKenzie responded they will be offering a suite of products to support tenants, but if an area is intensified the home may be moved or demolished to build more homes and therefore will not be up for home ownership. He said home ownership is a tricky issue as they have a mismatch of homes and size for customers.

- *If a house was demolished or moved to build apartments could the apartments be offered for home ownership?*

Mr McKenzie said, although he understood the connection to the site, they would not be able to offer them for home ownership as this would create the need for a body corporate to be established which is a complexity they don't want.

- *Are all 1,370 Kāinga Ora homes in Whangarei occupied?*

Mr Murray confirmed close to 100% were but there was always some turnover of tenants.

Placemaking and a partnership approach was discussed and whether NorthTec would be a more suitable site. Mr McKenzie said the issue would be to get NorthTec to move into town and that Kāinga Ora would be happy to assist with facilitation, particularly around the land.

Mr McKenzie said a lot of their work has been focused in Auckland as the Unitary Plan has doubled the capacity to build houses. He said it does change suburbs and they have worked through the process with Auckland Council and the community to see how the community would best operate without losing sight of Kāinga Ora's aim to get more homes built.

Mr Murray said they would be keen to work with Council and the community to do comprehensive planning for development and to work closely with iwi and hapu.

- Mr McKenzie was questioned about the number of times he had highlighted wanting to work with council but, under the Local Government Act, they had the power to bypass development contributions and building consents which are budgeted for in Council's 10-year plans. Mr McKenzie said he didn't know that they had the power to avoid development contributions and worked with the community. He said that they paid building consent fees where appropriate and have their own consenting agency so councils do not have to increase the number of building inspectors.
- It was felt that the two sites proposed for further discussion were associated to commercial developments rather than residential areas which need housing. Mr Murray said that they recognise the need to invest across the region but they are also responding to Council's plans which have up-zoned that land so it can be both commercial and residential. He said part of Council's strategy is to intensify in the Whangarei urban area. He said they need to have homes that are in small spaces around the region and homes in larger places and also provide homes that are in the centre, particularly where they have an ageing population so they can be close to the hospital and walk to doctors.
- *How will you select people who will go into those houses and who is best suited?*

Mr McKenzie said for those two developments they would look at who was most suitable among their existing customers first and then take the first person in need at the top of the list.

- *Can we have more detail around the masterplan you are in the process of developing for Otangarei and how are you going to handle the inter-generational ownership of homes?*

Mr Murray said they did some work 12 months ago with Otangarei and then more recently had a conversation with the community and hapu to say they wanted to develop a masterplan.

In terms of where they were likely to go, it would be intensification and involve taking homes away from people who might have been there for a long time. He said it is a difficult conversation to have with whanau and they work their way through it case by case but there are few people who don't want to change the status quo as there seems to be recognition and appetite for change.

Mr McKenzie added that they enable people to stay within their community where possible.

- *We all have a fear of intensification and community places, can we see some of Kāinga Ora's newer developments?*

Mr McKenzie said they could organise for Elected Members to see some examples, but it would be an escorted trip as they will be looking at people's homes. He said they are leading the charge in intensification and seeing it right across the country where it is the only solution. Communities haven't seen apartments previously so are quite nervous about it and they are really keen to show people that they are not grim concrete jungles but quality homes people are proud to live in.

- In response to a query, Mr McKenzie said the Ministry of Housing is responsible for the development of affordable housing. Kāinga Ora are looking at multi-generational homes but have an issue with inter-generational homes. The premise is that people will use the homes for support when they need it and then move out when they don't. They have changed their rules and policies on this so if parent dies and children still eligible they enable them to stay in homes and support them to apply to MSD, but if they are not eligible the home goes to someone else who is and is in need.
- The importance of the history around the Vinery Lane and Dent Street sites was discussed and their future potential, along with regard for the local residents.
- In response to a question, Mr McKenzie said Kāinga Ora do not purchase homes at auction in Whangarei.
- Mr McKenzie was asked about incentivising people provided with new homes to get into employment as industry is looking for staff. Mr McKenzie said that MSD try to get people back into employment and

there are many examples where their customers find employment through MSD.

Her Worship said she was heartened by the level of discussion which indicates Council wants to continue working with Kāinga Ora and that any proposals will come back to Council as there are some issues around the sites they have looked at, particularly car parking. She liked the idea of a trip to see some of the Kāinga Ora projects as they meet the direction we want for inner city living, but they may not be exactly those two sites.

Mr McKenzie confirmed that Kāinga Ora is open to all site opportunities and strategic purchases would be part of future discussions with Elected Members and they were certainly flexible and happy to look at any other sites, .

The briefing adjourned at 10:27.

2.2 Draft Natural and Built Environment Bill Exposure Draft

Her Worship reconvened the briefing at 10:36 and said the draft is a really important aspect of where change is coming and the main thing is that Elected Members have some feedback into the process at the end and some valuable input into the next steps.

Mr Kula said the draft is looking at changes to the system, structure and delivery return and is at an early stage with submissions closing on 4 August 2021. He said Mr Burgoyne will give a good overview of the framework, recognising some big gaps, and pick out the key points that are missing and areas of focus and interest to WDC.

Mr Burgoyne commenced the presentation with a quick background to the process and said since 2019 they had been progressing work looking at options. The exposure draft contains high level information on what the RMA reform will look like and he would talk through some of the key issues picked up so far for the WDC submission and cover the major shifts.

These are really key documents which will have huge impacts across the country and which everyone will have to follow. There is a shift from localised decision making to centralised decision making and is something that needs to be implemented with thorough involvement from the local community. The key thing is to make sure we are actively involved.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Mr Burgoyne was asked what time would be allowed for the consultation period for National Planning Frameworks and NBA Plans as, if it is short, there will not be enough information about the community's buy-in to the project and the local voice is getting degraded. Mr Burgoyne said that is a good point as there needs to be robust consultation, but he does not know what the consultation period will be as they are light on the details. We

should start having the process in place for a clear consultation process and proactively go out to the community to get local input for making submissions on things such as National Planning Frameworks.

- It was felt there was a lot of information and Elected Members were being asked to make a decision in a short time with still a lot of detail to be decided .
- If we want local involvement, we should be ensuring that placemaking happens with a fair amount of discretion at a local community level, for example Hikurangi, Tikipunga, Parua Bay and Waipu. Capacity building is going to be really important and there needs to be some provision of resources for that. It is important to have a two way exchange with the Select Committee in Wellington. (Dr Emily Henderson, Labour MP for Whangarei, was present in chambers and said this could be done via Zoom).
- Mr Burgoyne was asked if there might be a move towards environmental plans for development in the rural areas and, if not, could it be part of the submission. He responded that at this stage there were no specific details in that regard as indications are more focused on intensifying urban areas but it could be included in the submission.
- In terms of the submission, there needs to be membership on the Planning Committee with representation proportionate to the size of our district. It was noted Page 82 of the agenda details the membership of the planning committee. Mr Burgoyne said Elected Members will still have relevant involvement but there will be a shift in process so some of the decision making will be taken away from councils.
- There was no definition for the wording “must promote”.
- There was no topic around waste minimisation, air quality and insecticides/pesticides. Mr Burgoyne said that there was no information on the roles of District and Regional Councils at this stage but that presumably that would be status quo, but it was still not known what role the district councils would have.
- There was concern about the local government element being taken out and centralisation not always being the best with one decision coming from Wellington for places everywhere which are all different. If there is going to be change it should be identified what it will look like.
- Rather than central government people, there should be representation from someone who comes from, and knows, the area otherwise the local voice is removed. As a council, Elected Members are here to represent all our people.
- Mr Burgoyne was asked what issues could be submitted on and he responded that it was his understanding anything on the draft exposure is able to be submitted on, but if it is something that is not included it would not be well received as they are looking for submissions on the content.

- In response to a question whether the submission would come back to Elected Members for endorsement, Mr Burgoyne responded that it can but has to be signed up on delegation. Mr Kula said they would cover the broad points and the draft submission can be brought back to Elected Members.
- Mr Forlong said the government is between a rock and a hard place and the problem will be when they get to the nitty gritty. How smooth the consents process is and how people behave will show how successful it is. He suggested that the place where Elected Members want the most attention is when they get to the next level of detail and that the government is consistent on its centralisation process and also greater involvement of iwi and hapu. There is a deliberate removal of local. The other side of the argument is that there are currently 67 plans, all of which are different and how can you be consistent with that. Mr Forlong suggested that Elected Members added the need for political representation on these committees rather than officials who rely on processes, whereas political people have constituents. Elected Members needed to focus on when they get details about the consent and plan processes and there will be competition between local authorities as well.
- There was discussion and concern around the decision making needs of the local communities and to ensure some element of democracy is reflected in the representation.
- Mr Burgoyne confirmed that commissioners will be at hearings and make recommendations to the Planning Committee. He said that the submission process is an opportunity for local input.

Her Worship asked Mr Burgoyne to sum up what would be included in the submission. He advised they would elaborate on the bullet points covered in the presentation and one of the main points would be about localised decision-making and who is on the committee. He said they would work on the comments received from Elected Members but at this stage the submission is at a higher level rather than debating different approaches or flagging some of the potential changes which have issues and need to be worked through.

Mr Kula said they recognised all the discussion was at a high level, endorsing the approach and the leveraging of opportunities.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 11:56.

Cr Golightly left at 11:00.