

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 24 August, 2021
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting Room

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 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.

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 11:00 and handed over to Ms Rāmari Jackson-Paniora (General Manager - Strategy and Democracy) who would be leading the briefing and going through the strategy discussion.

2. Reports

2.1 Housing Strategy

Ms Jackson-Paniora said the first part of the briefing would give an overview of the housing challenges where they are seeking feedback from Elected Members around different options so they can initiate the strategy for affordable housing for the Whangarei region.

For the second part of the briefing, Mr Jeff Murray (Regional Director – Northland) from Kāinga Ora would talk about social housing as Kāinga Ora had expressed an interest to return to Elected Members for further feedback on a large scale development of social housing in the Vinery Lane carpark.

Mr Hamish Sykes (Strategic Planner) commenced the presentation and said the purpose of the briefing was to:

- Give a high-level overview of the key housing issues in the Whangarei District.
- Provide an overview of what Whangarei District Council is currently doing in response to housing.
- Seek feedback from Elected Members on the approach of the Housing Strategy.

Going through the presentation, he explained where the housing strategy fits, Council's responsibilities in housing, high level issues in the Whangarei District, economic and demographic factors which make Whangarei's housing sector unique and the national housing response.

Ms Injoo Riehl (Strategic Planner) gave an overview of the following five housing strategy options which would be presented for this strategy:

- Housing needs assessment
- Pensioner/senior housing
- Working with government agencies – social/affordable housing
- Council led strategy
- Community led strategy

She said some of the different approaches are quite inter-connected with overlaps and she wanted to initiate discussion with Elected Members around:

- What are the key drivers for developing the Housing Strategy?
- What is Elected Members feedback on the different housing strategy options/approaches?
- Who should we be talking to?

Ms Jackson-Paniora said there was a lot of information in the presentation but this is the beginning of a journey we need to take and Elected Member feedback around housing affordability, housing quality and conditions and housing choice is important.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Her Worship said this is a really big area of work with the five strategy options to focus on, but a huge amount of data has already been gathered so we are in a good position to look towards the future.

- The housing prices shown for Kaipara were questioned as it was felt they were rather high for Kaipara as a whole. Mr Sykes responded it came down to a median figure, so Mangawhai would have a large bearing on house prices but it does give an indication moving forward looking at the way population is anticipated to grow in Mangawhai.
Ms Riehl said this slide is more indicative than actual as the market is changing significantly and they will provide updated information.
- A level of comfort was expressed that under Council regulations there is sufficient land for housing under the National Policy Statement, but that we need to concentrate on where we can influence and be as pro-active as possible in order to get funding from other institutions.
- There was strong support for a community led strategy involving central government and other agencies.
- Hastings Council has been successful in their community led basis and it was suggested we should learn from them rather than start all over again.
- There is money in the LTP for pensioner housing which can go ahead without waiting for a strategy, but alongside a community led housing strategy. However we need to be careful not to take over central government's role and see what Council's role as a partner with Kāinga Ora is considered to be.
- The Chamber of Commerce should be involved in the strategy, along with views from the business community.
- It was suggested a smaller Elected Member group of two or three should work with Kāinga Ora to accelerate the provision of housing and meet some deadlines.
- There is evidence in the wider community that affordability of housing is the main area Council should be focusing on.

Ms Jackson-Paniora said some of the ways that Council can influence affordability is through urban design and potential housing options. Through strategy and collaboration partnership opportunities can be explored.

She thanked Elected Members for their input and said they will come back with the next steps.

2.2 Kāinga Ora housing investment in Whangarei

Ms Jackson-Paniora said Kāinga Ora had expressed an interest to return to Elected Members to seek further feedback on the large scale development of the Vinery Lane carpark and handed over to Mr Murray.

Mr Murray thanked Elected Members for the opportunity to speak to the proposal for a second time where they would be asking whether Council would wish to work with Kāinga Ora in partnership to develop options to bring back for further discussion.

Mr Murray said for today's discussion Kāinga Ora would like to investigate the opportunity to develop one and two bedroom apartments in Vinery Lane, work through any issues in the partnership and come back with some options.

He went through the presentation which covered the proposal to work in partnership and then handed over to Ms Sue Evans (Director Urban Design) to go through design and quality elements.

Ms Evans said she managed a national team and gave some background on Kāinga Ora and their job of delivering homes in collaboration with development partners in the business and councils. She talked about the approach to urban design and showed examples before focusing on Vinery Lane and what opportunities there are.

Mr Murray continued with the presentation and said they were looking for an opportunity to work with council to explore options through the design process and better understand the opportunities and concerns Council has around the development of Vinery Lane, for example how to manage carparking.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Whilst it was noted that Vinery Lane is an attractive proposal there were issues to explore. People have been using the carpark for some time and it is linked to a resource consent for Whangarei's library.
Mr Murray responded that perhaps Council could invest funds from the sale of the land into parking elsewhere.
- As Mr Murray had mentioned housing families with children because of the close proximity to schools, he was asked whether a larger number of bedrooms would be an option to look at. Also, if they were relocating tenants currently in three bedroom homes, would that free up those larger homes for other tenants.
Mr Murray responded that the design process could be worked through and the number of bedrooms could be explored with Council but the advice they have received is that the two bedroom model is working successfully. If older people are to be housed, it enables them to age in place and have a family member to live with them as a caregiver.
In terms of freeing up homes when tenants are relocated, he said people living in three and four bedroom homes whose children have left home could move into a smaller space.
- Responding to a question as to whether Kāinga Ora were still looking at other sites and where they may be, Mr Murray said they are looking at lots of different places. They had looked at the city centre but were cautious around issues of fill and the cost of building and were interested in other opportunities up on the ridge of Kensington which has been up zoned. They own land in The Avenues and have homes here which will be redeveloped to take advantage of the up zoning in the District Plan with

potentially 3 storey walk-ups or higher. They are also talking with private sector landowners and can make good use of the land Kāinga Ora owns in Raumanga and Otangarei. They could also be part of whatever future there is for the NorthTec site.

- Mr Murray said Council is already playing a fantastic role as a partner and has put a lot of money into infrastructure to enable growth and the Vinery Lane site provides a unique opportunity to turn that into a project.
- Mr Murray was questioned about Kāinga Ora's ability to look after apartments when there are complaints about Kāinga Ora neighbours and how putting in Kāinga Ora apartments would affect sales of executive apartments valued in the vicinity of \$1.3 and \$1.5 million.

Mr Murray said Kāinga Ora had changed when both National and Labour both acknowledged a lot more needs to be done to provide and maintain public housing and a lot more money has been provided. He said the legislative environment has shifted with warmer houses and they are preparing a list of up to 400 homes across Northland to prioritise. In terms of Whangarei, Kāinga Ora have 1,370 homes in the district and there are 65 on their list of people who are not living very well or not getting on with their neighbours.

Referring to the sale of executive apartments, Mr Murray said in terms of the overall market their impact will be small.

- Mr Murray was asked about the time constraints for accessing money in Kāinga Ora as it was assumed these apartments would take two to three years to build.

He responded it would take a number of years to open but could be delivered in 2024 and the government has a housing plan which calls on Kāinga Ora to deliver a certain amount of homes and this block would be delivered in the next period of the public housing plan. He said Whangarei is a high needs area and if there were good opportunities they would look to do them in the future.

- There was a query about the working design group and whether experiences elsewhere had involved Councillors as part of that working group.

Mr Gary Looker (Director of Development Strategy – Kāinga Ora) said they were more than happy to have Councillors involved along with delegated Council staff.

- It was important that there is some inter-relationship with Council's work in terms of senior housing to maximise the opportunities.
- Ms Evans said it was useful to note that Kāinga Ora try to place people in homes that work for them and they are under no obligation to accept homes and Kāinga Ora will find them something else.
- There was discussion around carparking in the Vinery Lane area which is very important and that surely there is alternative government-owned land

somewhere else in town Kāinga Ora could move into and get building quicker.

Mr Murray said they are looking at alternative sites and have been talking with a number of motel owners but, in terms of government-owned land in the urban centre, he is not aware of anything as good as Vinery Lane.

Kāinga Ora did not want to be seen as delivering an ultimatum, just developing options to see what it might look like.

- There was support from Elected Members to look further into this but there are constraints that needed to be considered, particularly in terms of the carparking.

Ms Jackson-Paniora thanked Elected Members for their feedback and Mr Murray for his presentation. She said they will take onboard the feedback and the constraints and issues that have been laid out. They will collaborate with Kāinga Ora going forward and come back with design options at a later date.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 12:58.