

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 9 September, 2021
Time: 10:30 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 Phil Halse
Cr Greg Innes
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Anna Murphy
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid

Not in Attendance Cr Jayne Golightly

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Adviser)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cr Golightly.

Her Worship convened the briefing at 10:30 and handed over to Mr Calvin Thomas (General Manager – Northland Transportation Alliance).

2. Reports

2.1 2020-21 Transportation Activity Update

Mr Thomas said the purpose of the briefing was to provide an update on the activities delivered through the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) in the 2020/21 financial year (1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021). He said this was also the latest quarterly update both on the improvement plan of NTA and the delivery of the transport programme.

The key highlights related to the record programme delivered across Northland, with Whangarei expenditure delivered up 40% on the previous year and 53% across the region. Over \$140 million has been spent on local roads in Northland last year and they are able to maximise the subsidy uptake and carryover some of the unclaimed subsidy to the next year.

Mr Thomas said, from another perspective, the asset management strategy team completed the Asset Management Plans for the 2021/24 period and are working on some of the underlying strategies and policies within that.

The other point Mr Thomas highlighted was the success of the Te Tai Tokerau MBIE worker redeployment. The latest count was 103 of 111 people (93%) have gone into continuous employment with those who employed them, which is a massive positive outcome. NTA will work with MBIE to put out a regional press release about the programme where over half the funding went to locally owned Northland businesses.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- *How much of the extra money spent was as a result of the same work costing more, as opposed to further work being done?*

Mr Thomas responded that he did not have the exact figures but a large proportion of the work was delivered through maintenance contracts which have fixed prices adjusted for escalation and in most cases it has been an increase in work carried out and significant physical work had been done.

- *When the NTA was set up there was a promise that an annual dividend of \$3 million would be received – where is the report as to where this went?*

Mr Thomas said NTA provided a benefits assessment paper to Council in mid-2020 which showed the benefits being provided were in line with the best estimates of the business case. He said recent increases in contract values are a result of additional work done through the Maintenance Contracts. During last year MBIE projects were facilitated through the Maintenance Contracts and that is why funding levels were increased and Mr Thomas is confident the work being done is not reducing significantly as a result of increasing costs.

Mr Weston added that he had provided Elected Members with updates during the formation of NTA when it was unanimously supported that the money would be reinvested back into the roading programme. Earlier this week, he had raised with Waka Kotahi how the increase in budget for the next three years compares against the last three and also the influence the bitumen will have on that. He is hoping that when Waka Kotahi present in the future they will have these sorts of answers.

- *How many extra roads, in terms of kilometres, has Council taken over maintenance for as a result of subdivisions?*

Mr Jeff Devine (Strategy and Planning Manager) said that is recorded in their system on an annual basis and can be provided to Elected Members. He said there had been a considerable increase over the last few years but allowance is made for that in their asset management plan and a request for budget is placed accordingly.

What is the policy about contractors going out and doing roadside clearing of trees?

Mr Thomas said the majority of clearance was around self-seeding wilding pines.

Mr Devine said in the rural areas permission is required from Council to plant trees on Council roading berms. He said lots of natural growth has caused a problem and taking trees out on public roads can be an expensive activity with health and safety requirements. A policy has been developed with the Parks department with an assessment of trees which need to be removed. In terms of the urban area, Council has a policy that allows the planting of approved tree species and others are taken out as funding allows.

Mr Thomas said with the MBIE programme with Waka Kotahi and the three district councils, nearly \$3.5 million has been provided for actively reducing roadside tree issues across Northland. This has enabled them to go through a lot of corridors and remove trees that could potentially be a nuisance in the future and this was a long term view of tree clearance. He confirmed this was a one-off piece of funding and specifically for redeployment work post-Covid.

- Mr Thomas was asked about slip damage around Whangarei which had still not been repaired and whether these projects would be looked at.

He responded this is subsidised funding that has been carried forward as part of an emergency works response. It is still being worked through as there is a significant amount of damage, but the funding is there to finish these jobs.

- When asked to clarify the numbers of people who had been deployed into full time work, he said they had engaged at least 294 and, of those, 111 were people who had been unemployed at the time. Of those 111, 103 have continued to permanent employment. The target of the programme was for those who were unemployed as result of Covid, but not specific if they had been unemployed long term. In NRC's component at least half of their 12 were unemployed and at least 10 continued to full time

employment. Of all those 111 employed, a significant number have come out with upskill training and qualifications.

- Mr Thomas was asked about bitumen costs and having to import all our bitumen for Northland from Tauranga. He said they are in conversation with their contractors at the moment about potential costs. On a national level, Waka Kotahi are looking at longer term options with the refinery, but he thought there may be a cost impact this year. They have set up a working group with Waka Kotahi maintenance and procurement teams to ensure they understand the approach and it is consistent.

Mr Devine said the price of bitumen has not changed significantly as the market in New Zealand was supplied from the refinery and what was imported was generally at the same cost. The difference for Northland is the additional cartage cost from Tauranga which is indicated by Contractors to be about \$200 - \$300 a ton. Council is looking at whether they are entitled to claim all/part of those additional costs or whether they are their own internal supply cost and the tendered rate included some fluctuations in bitumen. Also whether they can look at a new storage facility at the refinery for bitumen in the longer term. Council is working closely with Waka Kotahi to have a response on a national basis.

2.2 Water Supply Bylaw Review

Mr Andrew Venmore (Manager – Water Services) took Elected Members through the presentation which covered the review and the proposed changes and updates which were highlighted in the agenda.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- Mr Venmore was asked whether the possible compulsory joining of the 3 Waters proposal would affect the bylaw. Mr Venmore said it was still to be decided but legislation would be needed for the new entity to exist. He was particularly keen to get this bylaw through before then so there is no ambiguity around what council is doing and we don't have a hiatus between the two bits of legislation.
- In response to a query about Council still having ownership of the Hikurangi and Takahiwai dams, Mr Venmore said there will need to be a discussion with Elected Members at some point. He is preparing some work with suggestions with all of the landholdings of water service as decisions will need to be made as to their future and where they best sit going forward.

Mr Venmore confirmed that a document with tracked changes will be brought back to Elected Members in a month or two.

2.3 Graffiti Control

Ms Sue Hodge (Manager – Parks and Recreation) said they wanted to give Elected Members an update and inform them of changes that are happening.

She handed over to Mr David Lindsay (Solid Waste Engineer) to go through the presentation.

Mr Lindsay said, after 16 years of good service to Council, it was sad that Te Ora Hou Northland (operating at D'Tag) was no longer able to continue that work and they needed to address the gap that will be left.

The presentation showed, through CRMs recorded, that the number of graffiti incidents has been steadily reducing, potentially due to social changes, changes in legislation and potentially the hard work of D'Tag in quickly removing tags.

Mr Lindsay said a large number of graffiti jobs are on non-council assets and, as they are on private property, there are health and safety issues and liabilities that make these jobs more complicated.

He said this is an opportunity to look into some of the other options in the graffiti space and to lever community involvement into improving the beautification of Whangarei. He wanted to get Elected Members thoughts on what we should focus on when looking at the options.

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- There was general agreement amongst Elected Members that D'Tag had done an excellent job and they were reluctant not to continue with the service.
- It was noticed there had been an increase in graffiti in 2021 which was related to gangs initiation and recruitment and it was not a good time to remove the service.
- There was concern that if the service was removed, graffiti on private property, NZTA property and bridges and roadside would not be removed.
- Mr Lindsay confirmed that D'Tag's reason for stopping was due to illness.
- When asked what the Council's alternative was to D'Tag, Mr Lindsay said there are various contractors that include graffiti removal, for example toilets, roading and parks. He said it would now fall on maintenance contractors to remove graffiti on their assets. This raised a concern that it could take three months before these contractors remove the graffiti in their areas. Mr Lindsay said they will have to step up and they have talked to the managers to stress the importance of getting onto these jobs

as soon as possible and they will see in the next two months if they are able to.

- Mr Lindsay was asked if this will be a variance in the maintenance contracts and if they will charge more. He responded that he is not sure about all the maintenance contracts but, for the ones he does know, it would be covered under the day works and he is working through to see what the pain points are.

Mr Weston said within most of the contracts, if the works undertaken were not carried out, they would not get paid. Because D'Tag had been excellent there had been little of that work but maintenance contractors will have to pick up the work accordingly and be paid through the maintenance contract.

- Referring to Auckland Council's report, Mr Lindsay was asked if there was any potential in looking at prevention by bringing it to one location where they could practice their art as opposed to tagging all over the place.
- Mr Lindsay said this has been trialled previously in Whangarei nine or ten years ago and the comment at that time was that it was not a good idea. It allowed people to get the 'bug' and they went and tagged somewhere else. He said areas like the new skate park and bike park would be hot spots and they would need to come back to Elected Members with options and ideas to deal with this.
- There was concern that most of the tagging is on people's private fences and will not be cleaned if D'Tag are not providing the service.
- In response to a question, Mr Lindsay confirmed that the service was budgeted for in the LPT with a contract value of \$120,000 per year.

Her Worship said that reduction in graffiti was something to celebrate and was sad to hear that Te Ora Hou would no longer be continuing with the contract as the success in getting on top of graffiti was due to the work of Pomare Pou.

The current contract goes through to June 2022 and there was a general feeling from Elected Members that graffiti is unwelcome and they want it to be removed. The potential to have it accepted in some areas needs to be explored.

2.4 Infrastructure Acceleration Fund Update

Ms Shelley Wharton (Manager Infrastructure Programmes) said the purpose of this agenda item was to update Elected Members on the Expression of Interest applications made to the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF).

Kāinga Ora announced in June 2021 that at least \$1 billion of grant funding is available under the IAF for infrastructure which specifically supports housing development.

Ms Wharton explained the criteria that had to be met for applications and the scoring regime which would be assessed by Kāinga Ora for how well the proposal meets the housing criteria.

The following applications for funding were submitted by WDC:

- Port Nikau - \$38.836 million
- Weddel Farm - \$6.148 million
- Ruakaka/Marsden/One Tree Point - \$44.7 million
- Springs Flat - \$10.4 million
- Sands Road - \$2 million

Elected members feedback and discussion included:

- *Referring to Weddel Farm*, Ms Wharton was asked if Morningside Road would be widened as it is a narrow, slow street and Anzac Road is even narrower. She was not aware of a need for upgrading of Morningside Road and would have to ask Mr Devine as that is part of the growth plan for that area.
- *Referring to Port Nikau*, 4-laning Port Road would assist with the traffic but if it then went into 2 lanes, would only be a stop gap measure.

Ms Wharton responded that, as far as these applications go, they are purely looking at infrastructure that might be a constraint to housing, not the transport network. She said issues around Port Nikau are dealt with in terms of the transport strategy which identifies any future links to deal with traffic issues in the district. They would have traffic assessments undertaken to make sure roading networks are made safe to cope with increased demand.

Mr Weston said, for the Weddel Farm application, there will be a road built that links Kotata Heights Road through to Morningside Road which will take some of the loading off Morningside Roads. He agreed there is congestion at the SH1 and Kioreroa Road and said there are plans to improve that intersection.

Mr Thomas said he was going to provide some comments regarding the difference between this funding and the long term strategy for transport. He could only comment on the Port/Kioreroa Road intersection where it's probable to be approved funding.

- *Referring to Port Nikau*, in response to a question as to whether this included the cost of a roundabout, Mr Thomas said whether it is a

roundabout or T junction still has to be determined by KiwiRail requirements but funding is available for an intersection upgrade which covers either of those options.

- *Referring to Port Nikau, is there any discussion in terms of financial contributions by the developer as access along the harbour edge will be significant in the future in terms of the amenity of the area?*

Ms Wharton responded that, in terms of Port Nikau zoning rules, there are not any requirements for esplanade reserves in those areas, but the developer has designed in a network of harbourside reserves that are proposed to have shared paths to walk round the entire development. Not all of those areas are included in this application which is just focused on precinct 1 which is quite a substantial proportion but a small water frontage. The IAF fund does not include parks land or infrastructure. The developer has been in separate discussion with Council about offsets for development contributions in relation to reserves.

- *This fund is specifically targeted towards increasing affordable housing, have any of these sites been connected with increased affordable housing?*

Ms Wharton responded that the criteria asks for information about whether affordable housing is intended for the area and if there are any arrangements in place. The developer has been having initial conversations about the potential for affordable housing in the Weddel Farm development, but the fund does not require affordable housing to be delivered.

- *If another council is able to show a connection with the increase of affordable housing, are they more likely to attract the fund and have we the opportunity to forward that to the assessment committee?*

Ms Wharton said the guidelines didn't require that to be the case and we cannot say how it may assist it. She said it is up to developers to make those arrangements themselves and it would be difficult for Council to become directly involved in ensuring there were affordable housing outcomes, but we may have those discussions if we get to the next stage of this process.

- *Kāinga Ora will be looking, not only for proposals that increase the stock of affordable housing, but where it's well connected to public transport options. Our Council policy is to increase inner living, have we looked at places as close to the CBD as possible?*

Ms Wharton responded that the application asked for information about proximity to public transport and to other amenities, work areas and a

range of other things. It was part of the consideration but the criteria was for developments with a minimum of 100 houses within a ten year period, so it restricted which developers were ready and could fit the criteria.

Responding to Port Nikau being considered part of a flood prone area, Ms Wharton said this has been addressed through district plan zoning and the level of land has been raised. Areas are already zoned for development in the District Plan and would be assessed as they go through the consenting regime.

- Ms Wharton confirmed the housing could be apartments.
- *Referring to Sands Road*, Ms Wharton was asked how the roundabout would connect to the city paths network. She said she would get advice from Transport about their plans for that.

Her Worship thanked Ms Wharton for the presentation and hoped the WDC projects would be able to obtain some of the infrastructure funding provided.

3. Closure of Meeting

The briefing concluded at 12:12.