

4 DECISION REPORTS

4.1 FORRESTER HEIGHTS FUTURE USE ENGAGEMENT

The report, as circulated, sought to finalise the options and material for public engagement on the future of Forrester Heights.

When asked if the terms “public consultation” and “engagement process” had been used interchangeably or had a different meaning in this instance, Group Manager Paul Hope confirmed that they were interchangeable. He also noted that some members of the public believe that ‘consultation’ is about a special consultative procedure, but ‘engagement’ is not necessarily that. One elected member expressed a preference to refer to ‘consultation’ rather than ‘engagement’ and suggested that the wording be changed throughout the documents. Mr Hope advised that using ‘consultation’ in the documentation would mean Council was committing to hearing submissions and a far more formal process. One of the key purposes of this meeting and agenda report was to seek and receive Council’s decision on whether it was happy with the consultation / engagement process outlined by officers.

The decision to dismiss the option to set aside part of the area as green space and develop the rest because of difficulties associated with the creation of a reserve was noted, but in response, the option of including “doing nothing and leaving it as it is” was raised. It was clarified that that did not mean ‘do nothing forever’, but rather ‘do nothing now but leave it as an option for later’. Another elected member endorsed this suggestion as a ‘half do nothing’ and ‘half do development’ which was different to the ‘do nothing’ second bulletpoint.

The officer response noted that a mid-point could be considered at a later stage, eg if a decision is to try and make it into a reserve, then how much of the area to be considered could be a factor at that time, once the appetite of the community for the options – all or part of it – had been able to be assessed. The elected member reply was that, if it was still an option, then it should be included in the engagement materials.

After brief discussion, elected members confirmed that they were comfortable with hearing submissions; it was always intended that that would be a part of the engagement.

The potential for concern about how Council managed the process, rather than the process itself, were also raised, given that the subject matter was ‘emotive’ and a need to be clear about how differing views in the community could be received and heard.

In response to a question, it was clarified that historical holding costs for options to date and the cost of consultation or engagement had not been factored in so far.

The matter of a number of submissions being sent to Elected Members over the weekend was raised. It was clarified by the Chair that the submissions were in fact emails that had been sent to Elected Members and were not part of the formal consultation process which had not commenced at this stage.

One elected member advised that he had put aside the emails because he believed they would be prejudicial to his ability to consider all viewpoints at the hearings of all submissions after the engagement process, and he respectfully asked his colleagues to do the same.

MOTION

Cr Jim Hopkins said he was willing to move the report’s recommendations with one minor amendment to point 2(a)(ii) so that it read “to sell all or part of...”. Cr Kelli Williams seconded the motion.

Discussion on the motion:

At the request of the Chair, officers clarified that that would require a subdivision process in order to result in the boundary adjustment required and that there would be costs associated with that.

Motion Amendment

Deputy Mayor Melanie Tavendale moved that, wherever the reference to “public engagement” appeared in the recommendation and materials, they were to be replaced with the words “public consultation”. Cr Colin Wollstein agreed to second the motion.

Discussion on the amendment:

It was highlighted that, if the words could be used interchangeably, it was better to be very clear and go with the stronger wording of “public consultation”. This was endorsed by other elected members, who noted that Appendix 3 referred to “consulting”, and that having a submissions process was always intended so it would be appropriate to formalise that.

Chair’s Declared Vote Result and Ruling on the amendment:

The Chair put the amendment to them meeting and declared it **CARRIED** by a vote of voices. He then ruled that the **amendment was now part of the substantive motion**.

Discussion on the Substantive Motion:

It was suggested that Council must be willing to consider selling for the right price and the right reasons. The key issue was about how Council was to pay for things the community wanted or needed. 58% of ratepayers are already not happy with the level of rates. Council could either carry on adding to costs imposed on ratepayers, or it could ask them how they wanted Council to fund the things they want, noting that endowment land traditionally enable that to happen. This public consultation process would be an opportunity for the public and Council to consider that option and others.

These points were acknowledged, along with the extensive amount of work that had gone into this process and was still going into it. There were questions about whether selling the land would achieve the desired or required return, especially given the costs that would be involved. The response from the community could also be divided and using it as a reserve may still not be the way forward. There were other major issues taking up Council’s time and resources (eg the multiple reforms in the local government sector) that also needed to be a focus for Council and for members of the public.

Other points reiterated in the discussion included that some people still think Forrester Heights is a reserve, but it is not; currently, it is land Council could sell for the benefit of the community. A decision is now needed one way or the other, and it was important that as many people as possible have a fair and equal opportunity to have their say through a full public consultation process.

RESOLVED WDC 2022/009

Moved: Cr Jim Hopkins

Seconded: Cr Kelli Williams

That Council:

1. Rescinds item 2 of resolution WDC 2021/116 from the Waitaki District Council Meeting held on 10 August 2021, as follows:
 2. *Instructs Officers to compile feedback from a public engagement process on a range of options and present it to a future Council Meeting to enable a decision to be made on the future of the site;*
 - a) *Options to provide for feedback to include:*
 - i) *Do nothing*
 - ii) *Set aside the land as a greenspace reserve*
 - iii) *Develop the land as a reserve similar to Cape Wanbrow*
 - iv) *Set aside part of the land as greenspace reserve, and develop the remainder*

- v) *Sell the land “as is” through a tender or similar open market process;*
 - vi) *Seek partners for a joint venture in developing the land;*
2. Instructs Officers to compile feedback from the public consultation process and present it to a future Council meeting to enable a decision to be made on the future of the site;
- a) Options to provide for feedback to include:
 - i. Do nothing – continue to hold the land as endowment for capital gains;
 - ii. Sell all or part of the land; or
 - iii. Undertake work to establish the land as a Reserve.
3. Notes the difficulties in establishing the endowment land as a Reserve or using it as a park given the obligations of the endowments.
4. Endorses the consultation plan for the Forrester Heights public consultation process.
5. Delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Communications Portfolio Elected Members, the ability to approve the Forrester Heights consultation document.

CARRIED

CONFIRMED