

Waitaki District Council Memorandum

From Mayor Gary Kircher

Date 30 November 2016

Mayor's Report

Recommendation

That Council receives the information.

Purpose

The following comments are provided to bring Councillors and the public up to date with a number of issues that have arisen since the last Council meeting.

What's been happening?

In a departure from my usual Mayor's Report, I am covering several different issues briefly, but then focussing on one principal issue - the response to the recent tsunami threat after the Kaikoura earthquakes.

Strategic Beginnings

The Councillors and I have been keen to get a quick start to the term, and consequently have held two strategic planning sessions. The first of these was a Councillor-only session where we all had the opportunity to set out our individual goals and aspirations for the next three years, as well as air any concerns or appreciation for the any of the great number of activities that the Council carries out. This was a very valuable session, as it helped set the scene for the rest of the discussions. Some of the topics that featured regularly included tourism, recruitment of a new Chief Executive, Council-owned property, and major projects.

For the second session, we were joined by the senior managers, and went into more detail on a number of topics. They added in some of the issues which they felt were important, and we had a very good, interactive session. For a new Council, I felt there was a very high level of goodwill, ability, and a real sense of having a common direction. It bodes well for the term ahead of us! There will be a couple more sessions to further discuss the issues that we didn't have time for, and we will schedule those soon.



A strategic bunch...



The Waitaki District!

Waihemo Community Board

The new Waihemo Community Board was sworn in at their inaugural meeting, and there are a couple of changes around their table. It is another good mix of experience and skills, and I look forward to working with the new board for the next three years. The Ahuriri Community Board had one of their members unavailable for their first meeting, so I hope to feature them in my next report.



Back Row: Heather McGregor, Carol Watson, Paul Roy, Jan Wheeler (Councillor)
Front Row: Kathy Dennison (Chair), Ken Brown (Deputy Chair)

Learn To Ride Bike Park

The bike park has commenced, and will progress quite quickly! It has been a popular project since first being mooted almost two years ago, and it is excellent to see it coming to fruition. I want to acknowledge the good work that has gone into the project by a number of people, including Recreation Manager Erik van der Spek, who helped get the project together, and Councillor Tavendale who has helped with the design and been instrumental in gaining extra funding.

This facility will add to our already popular harbour playground, and adds a significant attraction for our smaller citizens and visitors. It wouldn't have happened without the support of Councillors and I'm confident that it will be very successful.



The layout takes shape!

28th Oamaru Victorian Celebrations

We have just had Oamaru's principal event, the annual Heritage Celebrations, a week ago. Although some of the events were affected by rain, earthquakes, and floods, we can perhaps be thankful that pestilence stayed away! Numbers may have been down for some of the events, but most ran very successfully thanks to the good organisation and preparedness of the various volunteers. Thanks go to the organisers and teams of volunteers for yet another splendid program which brought good numbers of visitors to North Otago.



Photos from the Network Waitaki Heritage Celebrations Fete

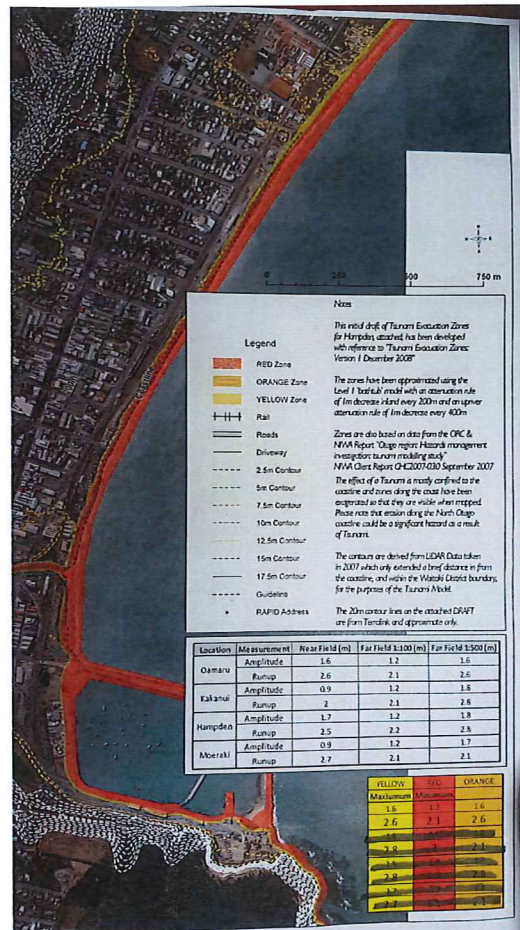
Emergency Management Debrief

The rest of my report is dedicated to the topic of emergency management and in particular, a report into the 14th of November event that caused so much damage around the Kaikoura and Hurunui districts. There has been a considerable amount of concern around coastal Waitaki about the local response to the general tsunami warning, and I gave an undertaking to look into the situation and report back on it. I have talked to a number of people involved in the event, and this information forms the basis of this report. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but it will pinpoint the areas where we did well, and where we need to improve. The following report describes my findings:

It was only a couple of months ago that there was a national exercise based on a scenario very similar to the situation faced on the morning of the 14th. Operation Tangaroa was an exercise that had a tsunami threat working down the South Island, and so that exercise was very fresh in the memories of those taking part. This was of course the point of any training exercise, but little did the participants know just how soon they would be going through the same situation for real!

The main earthquake occurred just after midnight on the 14th of November. It was enough to wake many people in North Otago and a good number didn't go back to sleep, as they sought information on what had happened and where. The subsequent tsunami risk was raised by the national Civil Defence headquarters, and our Emergency Management Officer, Ewen Graham, received the call. Ewen went to the Emergency Management Office and opened the building, where he gathered further information. It was shortly after 1am that he rang the Civil Defence controller and gave him a briefing. The decision was made to call in the Communications personnel, as well as the representatives of the NZ Police, Fire Service, and St John, who duly reported to the EMO.

The situation continued to be monitored, and the EMO was prepared. Maps showing the risks of inundation of various wave sizes were studied, and the latest information compared to them. In this case, the threat was reported to be a potential wave of 1-3 metres in height. The maps showed there were risks in very low-lying areas, but that the majority of areas were safe, including almost all of Oamaru.



The map for Oamaru. I am recommending that this map is updated and fine-tuned with the latest information, along with maps for the rest of coastal Waitaki to then be available online.

The immediate action was to ensure that those people in the most at-risk areas were aware of the threat, and in those cases ask them to evacuate. In this situation, the Police are responsible for directing any evacuations. Accordingly, the following areas were checked and people asked to leave for higher ground:

Waitaki river mouth (*cleared by Civil Defence volunteers*)

Police car sent to:

Oamaru harbour

Kakanui River mouth

All Day Bay cleared

Hampden Motor Camp advised

Moeraki low-lying areas cleared

Kaik 1 cleared

Katiki Straight campers cleared

Shag Point village advised

Kakanui town north of river to bridge (*cleared by Fire Service*)

Shag River whitebaiters moved (*cleared by Civil Defence volunteers*)

Goodwood low-lying area (*cleared by Civil Defence volunteers*)

As Mayor, I was woken with a phone call from the EM officer about 4.15am, and given an update. The Controller had decided he wasn't needed in the office. I ascertained that the risk was low and that the threat was being dealt with appropriately, and so determined that there was no need for me to go to the office at that stage, given our relative responsibilities.

During this time, the Comms personnel completed various tasks, passing on to the public the information they were receiving on the tsunami threat, and posting it on the Council's Facebook page, and the WDC website. General information was available on the national CD website and via the media.

The following message was the first on our Council Facebook page:

Monday 14 November 2.50am: Tsunami warning following earthquake. Please stay off beaches and away from shore areas. More information to follow.

Comms didn't add anything to the post until 4.13am, when a further comment raised a number of concerns and questions from members of the public as follows:

Waitaki District Council 4.13am:

We are contacting people in low-lying areas but are not evacuating anyone at this stage.

Jessica Fogarty

What areas would you class low lying areas? I'm next to the mill is that one?

Like · Reply · 2 · 14 November at 04:20

Ebony Kenneally

Yes can you tell us how close to the sea is WHAT is classed as low lying areas

Like · Reply · 14 November at 04:29

Larina Smith

Please we are close

Like · Reply · 14 November at 04:32

Waitaki District Council

Low lying areas are around Oamaru, adjacent to Oamaru Creek, Oamaru Harbour and up to Smash Palace

Like · Reply · 14 November at 04:38 · Edited

Wendy N Scooter

What about near waitaki river?? Alot if ppl left wondering

Like · Reply · 14 November at 05:52

Waitaki District Council

This isn't considered low-lying but we wouldn't want people going there. For people living in that area, the message remains the same - we're not evacuating anyone but keep monitoring this page for updates.

Like · Reply · 1 · 14 November at 06:00

The only other post on the Council page was at 12.19pm, notifying the public that the alert had been lifted.

The feedback I received from a range of people was critical of the response. Many people were left totally unaware of what was happening and concerned that there were no alarms or sirens sounding in what they had been told was a tsunami alert. This was not helped by the news that Dunedin had officially declared. There was a lack of understanding about what should happen, and the vacuum of information was then filled with concerns, bordering on fear, and a feeling that the authorities were doing nothing, or worse, that they lacked any coordination.

From all of this information, I am suggesting the following recommendations:

1. That a proactive educational program is put together to help the public understand what they should do during a similar threat in the future. This should include information that the police are responsible for any evacuation, and where the threat is assessed as serious, that there will be emergency service vehicles dispatched and if necessary, sirens will be sounded as well as a door-to-door evacuation actioned. A public release of the maps showing tsunami wave risks should be published online and in newspapers as appropriate.
2. That more communications channels are used. We no longer live in a world where people can just turn on their local radio station and find out what is going on in their location. Many people look first to the internet, and particularly social media for their information. This is interactive media, and our Comms personnel should be actively checking local pages and distributing information on as many of the community pages as possible. Radio Waitaki has just relaunched in North Otago, and its owner is happy to be called in to provide immediate assistance on live radio. They broadcast on 104fm.
3. That proactive information is shared with the public. Given the amount of feedback indicating that people were not aware of how they might be evacuated, it is important to proactively let them know that police and/or the fire service will actively evacuate people if a threat is deemed likely. Having said that, if people are in low-lying areas and they think they should leave, then that is what they should do.
4. That the on-duty Controller should report to the office as soon as possible during major events, to ensure all appropriate actions are being taken.

As I indicated earlier, I have not been able to identify and verify all information, but believe this is a reasonable summary of what occurred in this situation. The public is relying on us to act effectively and professionally. It is very important to stress that I am firmly of the belief that people were safe at all times during the event, and that anyone at risk was identified and appropriate actions were taken. However, as an organisation, we can do better with our communication and with ensuring that our people are more prepared and knowledgeable about what to do in an emergency situation.

Thank you.

Meetings Attended:

14 October	Meeting with John Baster, Harbour St
17 October	Meeting with Oamaru Race Course Committee
18 October	Mayor & CEO Catch-up
18 October	Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust meeting
19 October	Inaugural Council meeting
20 October	Tom Garbutt's 96 th Birthday Celebrations
20 October	Friends of the Oamaru Public Gardens Meeting
21 October	Meeting with Don Patterson, public art
21 October	Observatory Retirement Village Trust Meeting
21 October	Meeting with Colin Jackson re grandstand development
21 October	Oamaru North School Assembly
21 October	Meeting with Mark Smith, OWCT
23 October	Oamaru RSA Welfare Trust Luncheon

25 October	Mayor & CEO Catch-up
25 October	Meeting with Hampden Landowners
25 October	Meeting/presentation with Otago Community Trust
25 October	Meeting with George Kelcher, Road Metals
26 October	Council Meeting
26 October	Councillor Briefing
27 October	Meeting with John Walker, Whitestone Contracting
27 October	A2O Shareholders Meeting, Omarama
27 October	A2O Official Partner's Meeting, Omarama
31 October	Cultural Facilities Fundraising Group Meeting
31 October	Meeting with Recreation Centre Trust
31 October	Waihemo Community Board Inaugural Meeting
1 November	Mayor & CEO Catch-up
1 November	Meeting with Dougal McGowan, Otago Chamber of Commerce CEO
1 November	Meeting with John Brimble, Sport Otago
1 November	Ahuriri Community Board Inaugural Meeting
1 November	Business After 5 event
2 November	Meeting with James Porteous, Queenstown business
2 November	Executive Committee Meeting (Informal)
2 November	Meeting with Tourism Waitaki and OWCT
2 November	St Kevin's College Senior Prizegiving
3 November	Waitaki Boys' High School Senior Prizegiving
4 November	Meeting with Michael Sandri re event potential
4 November	Meeting with Cr Jan Wheeler
4 November	Meeting with Craig Stobo re public art
4 November	Meeting with Heritage NZ and Phoenix Mill Trust and volunteers
4 November	Meeting with Ross Pickworth, WCL
6 November	Zone 5 & 6 Dinner, Dunedin
7 November	Zone 5 & 6 Meeting, Dunedin
7 November	Waitaki Girls' High School Senior Prizegiving
8 November	Mayor & CEO Catch-up
8 November	Meeting with David Harbourne, UK author
8 November	Meeting with Deborah & Peter Duncan, asbestos issue
9 November	Extraordinary Council Meeting
9 November	Councillor Briefing
9 November	Youth Council
9 November	Youth Council Dinner
10 November	CDEM Meeting, Alexandra
10 November	Highlands 101 Official Welcome Function, Cromwell
10 November	Otago Mayoral Forum Dinner, Clyde
11 November	Otago Mayoral Forum, Alexandra
13 November	Victorian Fete Volunteers' Meeting
14-15 November	Ahuriri Ward Bus Tour, Strategic planning sessions
16 November	Council Workshop
16 November	Meeting with Select Contracts re Adventure Park
16 November	Meeting with Michael Sandri and John Crombie re A2O Ultra Run
17-18 November	Rural & Provincial Meeting, Wellington
18 November	Art Competition Judging, Rendell on Reed
18 November	Heritage Celebrations Magic Show, Loan & Merc
19 November	Heritage Celebrations Grand Street Parade
19 November	Rendell on Reed 21 st anniversary celebration
19 November	Heritage Celebrations Hoedown
20 November	Victorian Fete
21 November	Mayor & CEO Catch-up
21 November	Meeting with Rooney Earthmoving
21 November	Waitaki Industry Trained Graduates event



Mayor Gary Kircher