

Review of Waitākere Ranges Local Board investment in the Glen Eden Safety Hub

Prepared by: Community Empowerment Unit
Arts, Community and Events

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Background

1. Following community consultation for its 2014 plan, the Waitākere Ranges Local Board identified 'improving safety by providing a local office for a community constable' as a key initiative.
2. At the time, the community constable operated out of the local fire station, on the outskirts of the Glen Eden town centre. Locating the constable in the town centre provided an opportunity for the local board to partner with police, and was seen as a means to provide an extra level of reassurance to users of Glenmall Place.
3. The Glen Eden Safety Hub was established in 2015 at 2 Glenmall Place in the Glen Eden town centre.
4. The original lease was for a minimum of two years with a further two-year right of renewal. The local board allocates LDI funding towards the lease and operating costs of the hub. \$21,000 was allocated in 2018/2019.
5. In October 2017 the lease was renewed for a further two years at \$15,164 per annum with the balance to cover operational outgoings.
6. The current lease of the commercial space will expire in April 2019. The building owner is interested in negotiating a further two-year lease.
7. The 2017 local board plan does not specifically identify the hub as a key initiative, but the more general goal of family friendly, inclusive and safe public spaces, as part of a suite of initiatives to create an attractive and welcoming town centre.
8. Other projects that are being pursued by staff and the local board, which contribute to achieving this goal are:
 - Future improvements of public spaces in the town centre in the next few years– Purchase of 202-208 West Coast Road to create a new civic square in 18/19 (\$3.8 million) and improvements to West Coast Road starting in 2019-2020 (Auckland Transport funding)
 - funding contribution to Glen Eden Business Association and Glen Eden Protection Society for the organisation of Wheels Out West event in April (\$3,000) and the annual Christmas Parade and party in December (\$20,000)
 - pilot programme of public space activations in the town centre in summer/spring of 2019 (\$10,000), coordinated by the Community Empowerment Unit
 - arts activations from 2019-2020, currently in scoping phase (\$20,000)
 - Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) work programme with the Glen Eden Village Business Association (\$20,000)
 - funding for Glen Eden and Waiatarua Community Patrols (\$5,000 each from regional budgets) and Pacific Wardens (\$20,000 from regional budgets)
 - Glen Eden Library events and small community events supported through local grants, such as White Ribbon Day.

Use of the hub

9. The original vision for the hub was that the community constable would operate police clinical hours three days a week. The space would also be used as a base by local community safety groups, such as the local Pacific Wardens, the Glen Eden and Waiatarua Community Patrols (Community Patrols New Zealand).
10. An informal agreement was reached with the Glen Eden Village Business Association that the town centre manager would also work out of the hub as a means of promoting economic development in the town centre.

11. Attendance at the hub varies:
 - the town centre manager is the most consistent presence, and generally works from the hub three or four days each week
 - the constable plans to operate clinical hours on three days per week for up to six hours per week. However, the constable is often involved in other community operations and is responsible for a broad territory so his attendance at the hub is often irregular
 - the Pacific Wardens patrol the town centre on Friday and Saturday evenings, using the hub for team briefings, trainings and deployments
 - the Community Patrol groups regularly use the hub as a base when patrolling through the town centre on weekends. The hub is also used to host their trainings, meetings and deployments.
12. The use of the hub was also offered to other organisations with a safety or community development purpose. The Community Waitākere community broker occasionally uses the space as a hot desk when working within the area the newly formed Waitemata Ethnic Wardens are investigating the use of the space as a base for their volunteers and Vision West is currently making enquiries regarding the use of the space for their Housing First staff when they do their rough-sleeping outreach in the town centre.

The contribution of the Hub to town centre community safety outcomes

13. It is difficult to measure the extent to which the hub has a positive impact on the actual or perceived safety in the town centre, other than general anecdotal feedback received from the community. Other factors outside of the local board's scope of responsibility have a strong influence on the perception of safety, such as police operations, the prevalence of rough sleepers and beggars in the area, and the existence of drug-related activity.
14. Council's perceptions of safety measurement for the Long-Term Plan reporting indicates an improvement in daytime perceptions of safety in Waitākere Ranges town centres, increasing from 69 percent to 79 percent between 2016 and 2018.
15. Seventy-nine percent is equal to the average score across the 21 local boards, and the twelfth highest score regionally in 2018. It is also significantly higher than Whau (69 percent) and Henderson-Massey (68 percent) Local Boards.
16. Respondents to a July 2018 study¹ by Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) were asked what they liked least about the Glen Eden town centre. The most talked about topic was the level of crime, beggars, feeling unsafe and lack of security in the area. A few visitors mentioned that they avoid coming to the area at night because they feel unsafe.
17. Respondents mentioned that there is insufficient security in the town centre, and that sometimes the community police are not present when needed. Some felt that there are too many beggars, homeless and intimidating people hanging around the town centre, and that they don't feel it's a safe place for themselves and their families.

¹ Glen Eden Town Centre Research report Prepared for Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development and the Waitakere Ranges Local Board, July 2018 by Buzz Channel Limited.

Figure one: Responses to the Glen Eden Town Centre Research Report July 2018

What do you like least about the Glen Eden Town Centre? Base size = 268



32% crime/ security - loitering, drunks, beggars, smokers



23% untidy - needs modernising, beautifying, old, dirty



14% parking - availability/ hard to park on street, not enough



10% lack of variety of shops - nothing different, no supermarket, banks



8% accessibility - traffic control, congestion, poor pedestrian access



7% \$2 shops/ cheap stores/ too many laundromats and bakeries

**All other responses were below 5%.*

Suggested improvements:

Respondents made a variety of suggestions regarding what could be done to improve the Glen Eden town centre. Most suggestions reflected what they currently don't like about the town centre, and how these issues may be remedied.

Top themes:



22% general revamp - needs modernising, beautifying, artwork, cleaning, uniformity



21% better shops - mall, chain stores, variety



17% better food options/ variety of ethnicities/ cafes/ bars



12% more activities/ amenities - playground, pool, toilets



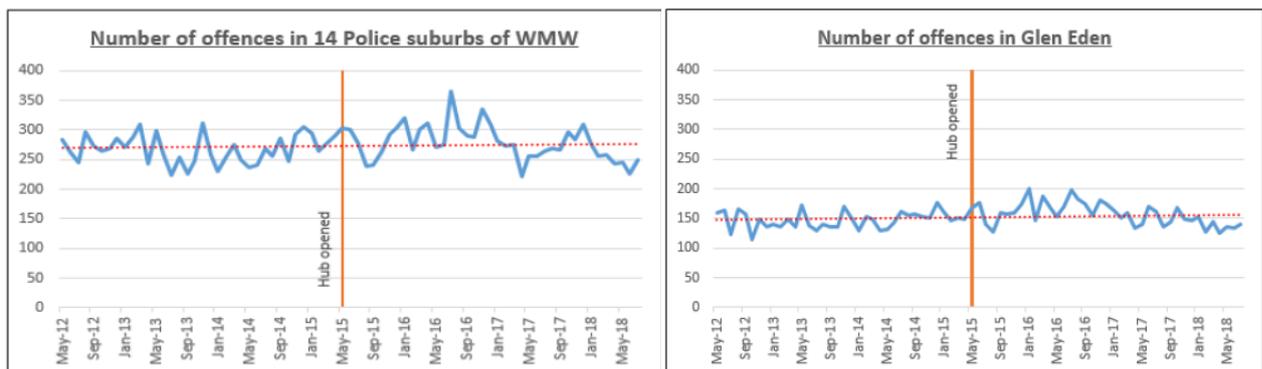
12% security/ community constable - address beggars, police station, lighting



12% less \$2 shops, bakeries, laundromats, takeaways, pawn shops

- Police data indicate an eight percent increase in recorded offences in Glen Eden since the hub opened in May 2015, compared to a five percent increase for the wider local board area for the same period. It is worth noting that this data shows an increase of reported offences in the Glen Eden area from January to September 2016, and a decrease from October 2016 to May 2018.

Figure two: Crimes reported in Waitākere Ranges area, and in Glen Eden, 2012 to 2018 (Source: NZ Police)



19. The most common offences in Glen Eden and the wider local board area are the same; theft, burglary and car conversion. The greatest increases in Glen Eden since the hub opened were offences relating to car conversion, arms act, and drugs (other than cannabis).
20. NZ Police advise that it is not possible to confirm any direct effect that the hub has had on reported offences. Crime analysis does not allow for the isolation of one variable; any fluctuations in crime reporting are likely due to many factors such as offender availability, the activities, priorities and resources of law enforcement agencies, changes in recording practices and changes in reporting channels.

Summary of feedback from users and stakeholders

New Zealand Police

21. Police advise that housing the community constable and safety patrol groups in the town centre has added value through raising the visibility of police presence and patrols in the area, which potentially has attributed to the reduction of criminal activities reported.
22. Police consider that the hub meets their needs by providing a space for the community constable to operate clinical hours, and engage with the public and local businesses. It also enables access to Closed Circuit Television footage (note –CCTV access is also available in the local board office) and helps a coordinated flow of information on safety issues in the town centre via the town centre manager.
23. Police remain interested in being part of the user group for the hub, and are interested in creating a comfortable ‘drop in’ space where conversations are out in the open.
24. The police recommend the current physical design of the hub could be improved through a few small changes (e.g. transparent front window), to create an open meeting room set up which will make the hub more welcoming and comfortable for users and visitors.

Volunteer Safety Organisations - Glen Eden Community Patrol, Waiaatarua Community Patrol and Pacific Wardens Glen Eden

25. The facility meets the following needs of these volunteer safety groups by offering a central location for patrollers to meet, plan, train and collaborate with other groups, including police, and offers visibility and profile of patrollers.
26. These safety organisations consider that the hub is welcoming, accessible, a “positive” space and convenient. However, a few small changes would make the hub more welcoming and comfortable for users and visitors and be more aligned with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines (e.g. transparent front window).

Glen Eden Village Business Association

27. As the most consistent presence in the hub and generally the only person in attendance during business hours, the town centre manager is the first receiver of queries and troubles of members of the public in relation to public safety and related issues, which are largely more appropriate to be addressed to the police. She describes being frequently interrupted by business owners or members of the public with safety concerns. She spends significant time reviewing CCTV footage to investigate concerns and assist police investigations. The business association consider this to be a distraction from their economic development and town centre activation responsibilities.
28. The management of the space on a day-to-day basis has by default fallen on the town centre manager as the primary user of the space. Repairs and improvements are organised as needed upon her request to council staff, but this is an aspect of frustration for the town centre manager. If the lease is renewed, all maintenance and operational issues should be added into the new agreement for Panuku Development Auckland to manage.

Alternative uses for the hub

29. Staff have explored various alternative uses for the hub:
 - community organisations such as Eco-Matters, Sport Waitākere and Community Waitākere advise that having a worker based in Glen Eden is not essential to the organisations' ability to deliver programmes in the area. Their staff may use the space for hot-desking if it is available and convenient for them. However, there are other spaces available for short term use (e.g. Glen Eden library) so this is not a priority for them.
 - Vision West, the West Auckland partner for Housing First Auckland, have confirmed their interest in trialling locating their outreach team in the safety hub from early March, from where they will base their individualised support for the local homeless community members.
 - business co-sharing needs: A recent study commissioned by ATEED has found that there is a shortage of co-sharing space in West Auckland. ATEED advise that a business co-sharing space could meet local needs and become financially sustainable over time, but a more detailed assessment is required before preparing a business case for this. Any such initiative would require an upfront financial contribution to underwrite the programme for a period of time until revenue from the leasing of desk space covered the cost of renting and managing the space.
30. It is worth noting that the nearby Ted Manson Foundation housing development under construction is due to open August 2019. This development will include community hub spaces for the residents, less than 300 metres walk from the hub, which will meet some of the needs of the new community.

Analysis

31. While there is no directly attributable link between the hub, perceptions of safety, and incidence of crime in the town centre, the hub largely meets the needs of existing community safety organisations by providing them with a workspace or base for outreach and patrol activities.
32. Anecdotal feedback indicates that some members of the public perceived the hub as a *de facto* police station, and therefore expected that it should be open at all times. This frustration was compounded by irregularity of attendance by the community constable during his clinical hours.
33. The unintended workload of the town centre manager in community safety as a result of her presence in the hub is a problem for the business association, and they have expressed a desire for this to change.
34. The space is underutilised and has capacity for increased use, but does not meet the needs of other local (non-safety) groups. If these groups were to be encouraged to use the space, its fit-out, brand and operating model would need to change to accommodate their needs.
35. Management of the lease, including maintenance requests, needs to move away from the town centre manager, and should be agreed upon with Panuku Development Auckland as the leaseholder representatives.
36. Police are supportive of exploring a refreshed vision for the hub which would enable the creation of a more engaging, comfortable space. The development and implementation of a new vision for the hub opens opportunities to work collaboratively with existing and potential users of the hub, look at the funding options for the hub in the long term and review its operational management structure, in ways that align with the Empowered Communities Approach.

Options for consideration and discussion

37. The operating model and costs associated with delivery of the hub is dependent on the local board's vision for the space, and the outcomes it hopes to foster.
38. The following potential visions and models have been identified for consideration by the local board:

- Option One – suggested option:

To enable community safety initiatives by providing a local office for a community constable and local community safety organisations (status quo)

- i. Renew the lease for a further two years, at a cost of approximately \$21,000 per year, or identify an alternative office location without shop frontage
- ii. Continue to accommodate police staff and local community safety organisations
- iii. Redesign the interior of the hub to create a larger meeting and training space for Community Patrols, Pacific Wardens, and Police
- iv. Refresh exterior branding to amend safety wording, removing front window images to improve passive surveillance and appearance (cost to be confirmed subject to design)
- v. Benefits: minimal disruption to existing situation
- vi. Risks: potential perceived gap in the short term if the hub is no longer perceived as being the go-to place to discuss safety issues; they can be encouraged to contact Police directly.
- vii. Financial implications: Minimal change. Costs of lease and operational expenses \$21,000 per year.

- Option Two:

To intensify community safety initiatives by increasing community safety focused-resources, partially-staffing the hub, and attracting additional safety organisations to use the space

- i. Renew the lease for a further two years, at a cost of approximately \$21,000 per year, or identify an alternative location with more space
- ii. Refresh branding and front windows to create a more inviting space (cost to be confirmed subject to design)
- iii. Propose a partnership with the Glen Eden Village Business Association to implement a part-time Community Liaison role who can implement an action plan for community safety and town centre placemaking initiatives. This role would contribute a dedicated safety resource for the town centre (freeing up the town centre manager for core responsibilities), take a holistic community-development approach to working with individuals of concern, and would be the public face for community safety staffing the hub. They could also coordinate a local safety network, liaise with police, and manage CCTV footage. A 15-hour per week role would cost approximately \$25,000 per year, potentially shared with the business association.
- iv. Benefits: largest impact on perceptions of community safety; town centre manager no longer exposed to interruptions from members of the public with safety concerns and no longer having to monitor CCTV cameras and investigate public nuisance concerns. Community Liaison role would be a positive face for community safety in the town centre and give business and visitors confidence that perceived safety issues are taken seriously and managed proactively.
- v. Risks: level of investment may be disproportionate to the magnitude of the community safety issues in the area.
- vi. Financial implications: Cost of Community Liaison role (e.g. \$25,000 per year). Costs of Lease and operational expenses for the hub \$21,000. If a new venue is needed, this will likely cost more than the current lease.

- Option Three:

To enable community safety initiatives in alternative ways, without the Hub

- i. Discontinue the lease effective April 2019 (saving \$21,000 per year)
- ii. Support all current community safety organisations to relocate to alternative locations before April 2019. There are several other facilities nearby that could accommodate their needs, such as the Glen Eden Library and Citizens Advice Bureau, and Harold Moody Community Centre.
- iii. Town centre manager to relocate to another suitable working space (not funded by local board)
- iv. Benefits: the volunteer safety groups continue to operate within the town centre and are supported to find adequate venues for their training and meeting needs; town centre manager no longer exposed to interruptions from members of the public with safety concerns
- v. Risks: may hold political risk for the local board, as a perceived reduction in investment in community safety. There is also a potential perceived gap in the short term if members of the public are no longer able to access town centre manager in the hub to discuss safety concerns; they can be encouraged to contact the Police directly.
- vi. Financial implications: Lowest cost option with potentially \$21,000 saving. This could be re-allocated to a new initiative which contributes to community safety (such as the community liaison role described in Option Two) or to enhance other projects and programmes in the local board's work programme.

- Option Four:

To shift the focus of the hub to advancing town centre economic development and offering business services

- i. Renew the lease for a further two years, at a cost of approximately \$21,000 per year
- ii. Support all current community safety organisations to alternative locations before April 2019, as described in Option Three.
- iii. Reframe the purpose of the leased space to house the business association and town centre manager, and encourage the business association to offer hot-desking and drop-in services that support local businesses
- iv. Rebranding the exterior would be at the business association's expense.
- v. Benefits: Enhanced support for the business association, with potential economic development outcomes. Town centre manager less likely to be interrupted by members of the public with safety concerns. Opportunity to progress the business co-sharing space concept in partnership with ATEED and the business association.
- vi. Risks: may hold political risk for the local board, as a perceived reduction in investment in community safety. Potentially the town centre manager will continue to be approached by members of the public with safety concerns, at least in the short term.
- vii. Financial implications: Uncertain, depends on agreement with Business Association. Potentially initially cost-sharing and eventually no cost for local board.

- Option Five:

To shift the focus of the hub to become a general-purpose community hub

- i. Renew the lease for a further two years, at a cost of approximately \$21,000 per year
- ii. Continue to accommodate local community safety organisations
- iii. Invite other community organisations to use the space and foster a wide range of community activities from the hub; contribute additional funding allocations for programming and activation from the space

- iv. Refresh branding and front windows to create a more inviting space (cost to be confirmed subject to design)
 - v. Benefits: minimal disruption to existing situation, and scope to increase service delivery from the space
 - vi. Risks: There is a potential perceived gap in the short if the hub is no longer perceived as being the go-to place to discuss safety concerns; they can be encouraged to contact the Police directly.
 - vii. Financial implications: Costs of Lease and operational expenses \$21,000 per year, plus funding for coordination and activation of the space (subject to separate business case).
39. Staff advise option one is preferred: to enable community safety initiatives by providing a local office for a community constable and local community safety organisations (status quo). This option maintains the current contribution to community safety outcomes and provides a platform for some growth. The cost to the local board is within current spending levels and contributes positively to the local board's desired outcomes for the town centre and community.
40. Option two is also an option that may interest the local board. This option would give the greatest community safety outcomes, but the necessary investment may be disproportionate to scale of actual vs perceived community safety issues in the local board area.

Next steps

- 41. Subject to feedback from the local board, staff will develop detailed costs and recommendations associated with preferred options, for consideration at a future workshop.

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