Date: Thursday 24 September 2020
Time: 4.00pm
Meeting Room: This meeting was held via Skype for Business.
Venue: Either a recording or written summary will be uploaded to the Auckland Council website.

Waitakere Ranges Local Board

OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

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Note: The attachments contained within this document are for consideration and should not be construed as Council policy unless and until adopted. Should Councillors require further information relating to any reports, please contact the relevant manager, Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson.
Chair Greg Presland

Board Report

Asset sales and 300 West Coast Road

- I have had a deep involvement in Glen Eden since 1988. Back then I wanted to set up a law practice close to where I lived. I looked around West Auckland and found some rooms in the Sunde Building. It was close to home, the rent was cheap, and it was in the middle of a vibrant and interesting area.
- It reminded me of Mangere Bridge where I grew up. A similar sense of community built up by working class people wanting to raise their kids and live their lives perched out on the edge of the city.
- Since than I have developed a deep affection for the area. The people are great. The institutions are strong and there is real pride in the area.
- Development of the area has been slightly haphazard. A new library was constructed back in 2003. I was on Council at the time and was happy to support this. But other plans have not progressed as well as they could have. A number of proposals for change over the past few decades have been made by different councils but not progressed. This board’s One Local Initiative, the creation of a Glen Eden town centre is still firmly in our plans, but implementation could be five years away.
Electrification of the rail and improved rail services have had a dramatic effect. Suddenly Glen Eden is a transport hub. And with the promise of quick efficient train trips taking 30 minutes to get to the centre of Auckland after completion of the City Rail Link Glen Eden’s popularity is bound to increase.

In anticipation of this intensification is already happening. The twin towers are practically complete and soon over 300 new residents will call the place home. Nearby on Wilson Street another apartment house is being constructed. A fair chunk of Glen Eden is zoned terraced housing and apartments and fairly intensive developments are occurring at a rapid space. I am aware of developments on Routley Drive, Glendale Road and Brandon Road that will significantly change the area.

To cope with and prepare for this change Council needs to take an active role. There will be huge pressures on local parks and facilities. Letting kids play in the cemetery just is not going to cut it.

There is a piece of Council owned land at 300 West Coast Road that the local board has been very proactive of. Originally it was slated for sale. We saw a need for some of the land for our Greenways plan, to allow residents of Verdale Circle and Barnea Circle to walk to the township rather than drive and managed to get this retained. But the balance is for sale.

It was previously used as a Glen Eden Borough works depot. And it has contamination issues. To prepare it for sale will cost a significant amount of money. It could be sold as is, but this would severely hurt the sale price and may destroy any financial benefit from doing so.

Council recently considered its future. We urged Council to retain all of the land. We have pointed out the growth that is already happening in the area and the need to preserve open space is strong. We are worried that if it is sold then this part of our greenways plan may become a dead end because roadside access will be lost and current access to Glendale Road depends of the neighbours’ good will.

Intensification is inevitable. It is also important. If we want to address homelessness and at the same time make Auckland more sustainable then intensification around transport hubs is vital.

But to make it work properly we have to make sure that our urban centres have plenty of open space and parks and walkways are protected and enhanced.

There is one further reason that the local board opposes the sale and that is privatisation of assets never seems to work. A nearby example at 265 West Coast Road provides a classic history of how privatisation can work out.

The land was sold originally by the Crown in the 1990s for less than $150,000 and then leased to Council. Near the end of the lease’s term a few years ago the yearly rental paid was the same as the amount gained from the sale. The CV of the land is now $1,775 million. And instead of the section being the centre of Glen Eden’s future development there is a gas station on it.

Council confirmed sale of the balance of the land. I appreciate the Councillors were in a difficult position. The financial pressures on Council are huge and the need to release cash is vital. But I can’t help but think that this decision is not optimal for Glen Eden.

The process has the doublespeak description of being “asset recycling”. There will be a sale process and the local board will be able to continue to advocate for protection of our Greenways routes. But this example highlights that in dealing with the short-term emergencies posed by Corrid we need to also remember the long-term imperatives.
On a positive note I mentioned in last month’s report that there were two other potential asset recycling proposals involving the sale of land in Laingholm and on Scenic Drive. The Local Board wrote to Council seeking that they are not proceeded with primarily because of environmental considerations. I am pleased that the decision has been made not to proceed with the sales at this stage and further consideration of their future use will occur.

Westlight apartments

- They are getting close to opening and it is anticipated that within the next month or two the first residents will be moving in.
- There has been some speculation about who will be selected to live in the social housing which accounts for 60% of the total units. Compass NZ which will manage the facility advises that there will be a mix of older and single person households, couples and families with children. It is expected that many of the people selected will be currently living in West Auckland in properties that do not meet their needs. The Department of Corrections has confirmed that it will not use the Westlight Apartments to provide temporary accommodation to its clients.
- It is important that we welcome the new residents to our community and integrate them into Glen Eden.
- The Welcome Home campaign, spearheaded by the capable Jade Tang Taylor and associates, is ready to launch and already has its website www.welcomeneighbours.nz up and running.
- I am confident that Jade’s project will be an outstanding success. And provide us with a model that we could use for other projects occurring in growth areas.
COVID-19 and local meetings

- As I write this the end is in sight for level 2.5 and we should be back to Covid level 2 and, fingers crossed, we will be back to level one in a couple of weeks time.
- This last lock down has been easier but at another level more difficult than previous lock downs. Easier in that we all knew what to do and have stuck to it. More difficult in that the sense of novelty has worn off and being housebound in the middle of winter is more difficult than during a dry warm Autumn.
- It is clear that many people have made permanent changes to their lifestyles. Working from home is now more common. Zoom meetings have become a remarkable feature of modern life. The benefit of not having to travel at night to attend meetings in the area is a boon. And behaviour is adjusting. Originally online meetings were somewhat stilted, but people are learning how to engage online. I don't think we will be going back from this, for better or for worse.
- Hopefully we will be back to normal meetings soon. But I hope that we do build on technological advances and techniques that we have learned this year.

Council’s ten-year budget

- It feels sometimes like Auckland Council is always consulting on one budget or another. No sooner has the emergency budget been completed than Council is getting ready to discuss the next budget with the Auckland community. The next budget to be discussed is the long term 10-year budget.
- The next one will be especially important. Addressing the medium and long term effects of Covid will be a priority. I suspect that for the next two years at least the effects will still be dramatic. We may have to wait for a widely available vaccine to be available before the borders can be reopened and normal tourism resumed.
- But this is not the only future problem. Auckland Council’s infrastructure deficit will continue to be a major issue. The disruption to the city’s transport networks caused by the damage to the Harbour Bridge shows how fragile our infrastructure is. And the pressure on our water supply this coming summer could be intense.
- Climate change continues to be the emergency around the corner that will make the effects of Covid appear to be minor in comparison. We urgently need to transform the city into a sustainable city. This means a fundamental rejigging of our transport networks prioritising public transport, especially rail and light rail. And provide for growth and intensification around our transport hubs.
- We will need brave political leadership. And to bring the people of Auckland along every step of the way.

Recommendation

- That this report be received.