

Minutes for a hearing of the Policy & Regulatory Committee (to hear and consider submissions and make recommendations on the Proposed Freedom Camping Bylaw 2023) held in the Council Chambers, 15 Galileo Street, Ngaruawahia on **TUESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2023** commencing at **9.30am**.

Present:

Cr C Eyre (Chairperson)
Cr C Beavis
Cr M Keir
Cr E Patterson
Cr V Reeve
Cr M Raumati
Cr L Thomson
Cr P Thomson
Cr T Turner
Cr D Whyte

Attending:

Mr J Ebenhoh (Planning & Policy Manager)
Ms M Rinaldi (Corporate Planner)
Ms C Pidduck (Legal Counsel)
Ms T O'Shannessey (Monitoring Team Leader)
Mr M Bennyworth (Compliance Officer)
Mr R Hermann (Community Safety Manager)

Ms E Saunders (Senior Democracy Advisor)

The Policy and Regulatory Committee opened the meeting with a Karakia.

APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Resolved: (Crs P Thomson/Turner)

THAT:

- a. **apologies from Her Worship the Mayor, Mrs JA Church; Cr J Gibb; Cr P Matatahi-Poutapu and Cr K Ngataki, for non-attendance be accepted.**

CARRIED

P&RHE2309/01

CONFIRMATION OF STATUS OF AGENDA ITEMS

Resolved: (Crs Eyre/L Thomson)

THAT:

- a. the agenda for a meeting of the Policy and Regulatory Committee hearing of the Freedom Camping Bylaw held on Tuesday, 12 September 2023 be confirmed; and
- b. all reports be received.

CARRIED

P&RHE2309/02

DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

REPORTS

Hearing Report on the Freedom Camping Bylaw
Agenda Item 4.1

The report was received under [P&RHE2309/02] and taken as read and no further discussion was held.

Resolved: (Crs Turner/Reeve)

That the Policy and Regulatory Committee, pursuant to section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002, considers all submissions and, where requested, hears submissions on the Proposed Freedom Camping Bylaw 2023.

CARRIED

P&RHE2309/03

Hearings – Verbal Submissions: Proposed Freedom Camping Bylaw Hearing

The following submissions were presented, and submitters responded to questions:

Greg Wiechern (Submission ID 6881, Page 133)

- Mr Wiechern gave an overview of his submission to the Committee and spoke to his solution around disposal of waste.
- It was noted in response to a query that Mr Wiechern did not reference the proposal to create a restricted area in Stewart Street in Raglan as it is outside the Ngaaruawaahia area but did advise that he would like to see the bylaw make it easier for families and particularly young people to have access to cheaper accommodation.
- The Point is the main freedom camping area in Ngaaruawaahia and Mr Wiechern would not like to see the Point Reserve restricted as he thinks Ngaaruawaahia has potential to become a bigger Freedom Camping place.

Rosemarie Costar (Submission ID 6937, Page 73)

- Mrs Costar advised that 60% of the community on the FB page supported the Freedom Camping Bylaw and 26% were opposed.
- It was noted that of the 26% that were opposed to the bylaw it is made up of a lot of people that do the clean up after campers have been.
- Concern was raised around children at the playground near the freedom camping area as no-one knows who the campers are or how long they are staying for.
- It was further noted by Mrs Costar that Freedom Camping is not free at all; it costs the ratepayers to clean up afterwards and dispose of waste.
- The issue the community have is that Freedom Campers for unknown reasons prefer to use the bushes and surrounding open reserve area rather than using the public facilities that are readily available.
- Concerns raised in relation to the piles of rubbish left behind by freedom Campers which the Community have to clean up and dispose of.
- It was noted that unless the staff monitoring the bylaw are at the facilities when campers leave then they aren't going to get caught so it's up to community members to monitor this and clean up.
- It was noted by the Committee that Onewhero seem to be a special case that Council could treat slightly differently to help ease the issues raised. The Committee could look at the possibility of having a Council skip bin on-site or having more monitoring of the area take place with a dedicated northern monitoring officer that would help the community.
- It was noted that 99% of the freedom campers in the Onewhero area are either in a smaller vehicle or they pitch a tent and the issues noted in the submission don't come from those campers that are in certified motor-homes.

- The Committee asked what solutions the Onewhero Community see in assisting with the issues raised. The community as a whole and on principal support Freedom Camping but the toileting & rubbish issue is something that really needs to be addressed. The Onewhero Reserve is well used by local community members so these issues need to be looked at if the bylaw for this reserve is going to go ahead.

Dennis Amoores (Submission ID 6930, and Submission ID 6944, Pages 92 & 40)

- It was noted that Mr Amoores agrees with the proposed Stewart Street restriction in the bylaw.
- It was noted that Mr Amoores and the Raglan Community would prefer a 3 night limit rather than 5 nights for freedom camping.
- Mr Amoores queried the rule around freedom camping in a Council Reserve. It was his understanding that as long as a freedom camping site is mentioned in the Reserves Management Plan it could go ahead.
- Mr Amoores advised that the Bylaw needs to include East side James Street as a no-go camping area as the Bowling Club have regularly complained at Raglan Community Board meetings that they are having to clean up after campers in that area all the time. If Council are going to have this area as a camping site than it would be good to have the site on the other side of the road.

Shaun Mead on behalf of John Lawson (Submission ID 6551, Page 305)

- Mr Mead noted for the Committee that he is a freedom camper, supports the submission by Mr Lawson and is happy to speak on his behalf.
- Mr Mead supports Freedom Camping as a whole but notes that he does not support campers breaking the bylaw rules or leaving rubbish behind for community members to pick up.
- The 2016 Bylaw as a whole works well but not in Raglan where more than half of freedom camping complaints come from and he noted that the new Bylaw does not seem to address the concerns raised. This Bylaw might work better if the camping areas were not in the residential zone.
- Mr Mead advised that the amount of rates paid to Council by residents mean that Council should be monitoring the Bylaw better and have more dedicated staff in order to make this happen.
- Mr Mead outlined for the Committee some examples of the different issues that have arisen in the Raglan Community with freedom campers in the past.
- It was asked by the Committee if Mr Mead felt that the dedicated monitoring officers that Council do have particularly for the Raglan area aren't doing the job? It was advised by Mr Mead that there are definitely staff monitoring the freedom campers in Raglan but it doesn't seem to have any effect whatsoever. It was noted by the Committee that the current staff may need to sit down with concerned residents to address the issues raised.

