

Board aims for open future with Auckland Transport

The Waiheke Local Board is planning to establish a more open, communicative relationship with Auckland Transport in 2019.

Historically, the board and AT have encountered issues with AT undertaking work on the island without informing the board and, as such, the community.

“We are looking to sign a relationship agreement in the first quarter,” says board chair Cath Handley.

The Waiheke Local Board and chief executive of Auckland Transport, Shane Ellison, as well as two members of his leadership team, met mid-December, to discuss transport issues for the island.

The meeting was focused on understanding the obstacles for both Waiheke and for Auckland Transport that have hindered effective communication and collaboration in the past.

Also discussed were the steps they would take going forward to build a productive working relationship.

Ms Handley said the meeting was

quite a watershed. “We were delighted with Shane’s positive commitment to change and that of his colleagues. We are all optimistic about getting this right.”

“In the past, Auckland Transport has not met the needs of the community, and there has been a pretty broadly spread lack of satisfaction with it.”

In a recent council survey, nearly 90 percent of respondents said they did not trust Auckland Transport to make the right decisions for the Waiheke community, and Ms Handley says there is a need for the board to get ahead of the work that AT does, as some works have come as a complete surprise.

“I’m not blaming Auckland Transport; there are a number of reasons for this. What we are looking to do is to establish a new footing for the relationship, and that will then flow straight into a 10-year plan that we are working on which includes all AT projects, roads, footpaths, safety, maintenance etc.”

“We are currently working on the 10-

year plan, and it’s about prioritisation of all AT projects. Our intention is increased collaboration and an open relationship.”

The parties will meet again in February in the hopes of finalising the terms of a new agreement. Meanwhile, the local board and staff will work on the terms of that agreement, based on the discussions held on Waiheke, and Mr Ellison and Ms Handley will meet in January to review progress.

“There are no promises in these things, but if we can get a relationship agreement signed in the first quarter next year we’ll be well on the way to a collaborative future,” said Ms Handley. • *Sophie Boladeras*

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