

GULF NEWS

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WAIHEKE'S COMMUNITY NEWS MAGAZINE SINCE 1973

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Photo Oscar Bezzant

RAMS CHARGING TOWARDS FINAL: Rams' ball-carrier Cam Bosman and his team mates kept their focus in last Saturday's home game against the Manurewa Marlins, beating them 34-6 and claiming the crucial second spot on the table going into the semi-finals. Full report page 36.

Survey finds we have little say on island's biggest problems

A survey to benchmark plans to test a more inclusive style of governance for Waiheke has residents slamming both Auckland Council and Auckland Transport on their current levels of communication and understanding of the island.

Designed as a snapshot of community sentiment at the start of a three year pilot for

greater local decisionmaking, the survey was put together by Dr Jesse Allpress and Penelope Tuatagaloa and showed that 81 percent of the island's 477 residents who undertook the survey did not believe that the council currently listens to the Waiheke community.

Two thirds of them said they did not think the local board

currently has the right amount of power and all but a tiny handful felt the board needed more power to deal with pressing issues, tourism being at the top of the list of islanders' concerns.

In late 2017, a three-year Auckland Council pilot project was established to trial ways of giving the Waiheke Local Board - and the Waiheke com-

One in ten of those surveyed said threats to Waiheke's unique character were their top issue.

munity - greater influence over the decisions that affect life on the island.

The current online survey was undertaken among Waiheke residents in April 2018. Commissioned by the Waiheke

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Gulf News
45 years strong

Also this week • Mike Lee takes Waldens' water woes to council chief page 6 • Kauri disease risk closes Onetangi Reserve long-term page 12 • New era for Charlie Farley's page 17

Survey highlights residents' concern ...continued from page 1

Local Board, it was designed to identify the main issues that residents are concerned about, and to explore how well they feel the Waiheke Local Board, Auckland Council and Auckland Transport (AT) are addressing these issues.

Letters were sent to 4734 island households, outlining the purpose of the survey and inviting people to go online and fill it out.

A total of 477 people, most of them residents for more than ten years, completed the survey, 29 percent of them rating tourism as their top concern. They noted strong negative impacts on infrastructure, environment and way of life despite undoubted benefits. Road quality and maintenance, Matiatia parking and congestion, generally poor quality infrastructure and Auckland Council decisions, rates and bureaucracy were the other top five concerns.

One in ten of those surveyed said threats to Waiheke's unique character were their top issue, with too many people for the infrastructure. Problems included tourist buses, specifically double-deckers on narrow, winding, tree-lined roads; people buying houses on the motu for weekend escapes or tourist accommodation and driving affordable rentals out of the

market, forcing long-time residents to leave; too many people wanting to park at Matiatia because the current bus system isn't adequate; too many buses and taxis all wanting keyhole space at Matiatia; too much demand on the island's aquifer and too many new houses (and estates).

"Tourism needs to be controlled to ensure a sustainable place" said one respondent.

Some others specifically mentioned large tourist buses, including the double-decker tourist bus service introduced by Fullers in 2017. They felt that they were inappropriate in relation to the current size and quality of roads and that they caused safety issues.

"In our case, big is not good!" one resident told the survey team. "We are dependent on Auckland Council which doesn't have our island interest at their heart. The council does not have the understanding or the proper perspective on the issues we have as a rather small semi-isolated community: environmental issues, waste control,

pest control, parking, road use and transportation."

Waiheke's coastal scenery, beaches, vineyards, water sports, walking tracks and events make it a popular holiday destination, with an estimated 1.3 million 'unique' visitors in the year to 2017, 200,000 more than the previous year, the report said.

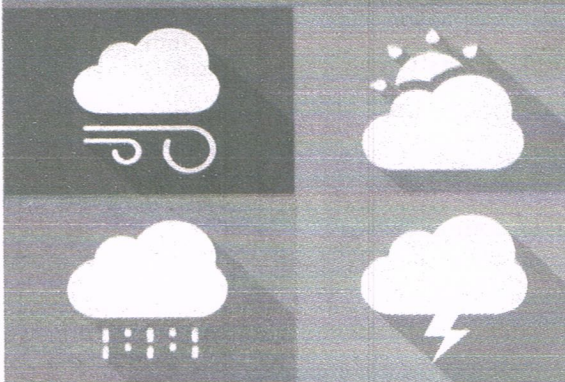
However, respondents reported narrow roads full of

potholes with little or no regular maintenance, open roadside stormwater drains full of weeds, erratic footpaths and fast-moving traffic that made walking and cycling unsafe, when they should be preferred modes of transport.

They also had concerns over housing availability and affordability, including the impact of the super rich buying up land and housing but then



WAIHEKE WEATHER



Supplied by Weatherwise Auckland, 020 4023 0106

30 July - 5 August 2018	Rainfall mm		Maximum temperature °C		Minimum temperature °C	
	Waiheke	Auckland	Waiheke	Auckland	Waiheke	Auckland
Monday	0.0	0.0	16.0	18.1	8.7	6.4
Tuesday	0.0	0.0	15.5	16.5	11.5	11.1
Wednesday	2.0	1.5	17.0	18.3	10.0	6.9
Thursday	1.0	3.0	15.9	17.6	11.4	11.2
Friday	0.0	0.5	14.7	15.1	8.0	6.1
Saturday	1.5	0.5	16.1	17.8	9.7	8.3
Sunday	0.5	2.0	15.9	16.1	10.7	8.7
Weekly Total	5.0	7.5				
August Total	5.0	7.5				
Weekly ave			15.9	17.1	10.0	8.4
August Hist Ave	109.0	137.2	15.8	15.7	8.7	8.6

not participating in the community, loss of affordable housing, few rentals resulting in low paid workers being imported from the city for the day and lack of low cost housing and low cost rental housing.

A regular theme was that more and more locals are being "pushed" off the island which damages the sense of community and leaves many in the community with a sense of their futures being marginalised.

The survey canvassed how much influence residents thought the Waiheke Local Board, Auckland Council and Auckland Transport have over these main issues, finding almost half (49 percent) feel that the local board had 'low or no influence' over the issues they identified.

In contrast, most felt that Auckland Council (64 percent) and AT (66 percent) had 'high influence' over the issues affecting the island and that all parties were ineffective in addressing the issues they were most concerned about.

When it came to the local board, that was because it had limited power in relation to the city and transport CCO, respondents said, one talking of nothing happening and residents paying huge rates and seeing nothing in return.

It was also felt that Auckland Council and AT ignore the wishes of the local board: "The Local Board does not have much decision-making power and some of this weakness was locked in when the Super City legislation was enacted, and then CCOs seemed to operate as fiefdoms of their own. The Auckland Council bureaucracy has huge power and this power needs to be more divested to local boards.

"They have initiated some development but AT hold the budget and they don't have control of that."

In conclusion, the authors of the report say its results indicate that there is a strong perception that the local board needs more power, that all parties need to communicate more effectively with the Waiheke community and that more action is needed to deliver required infrastructure.

"There was also a cross-cutting theme that Auckland Council and AT need to bet-

ter recognise and appreciate the 'unique character' of the island.

"The findings from this report will be useful for guiding the local board, Auckland Council and AT as they collectively work toward giving the board more influence over the decisions that affect life on the island. The survey will be repeated to track progress over the three-year period of the pilot," they said. • *Liz Waters*

'Heavy-handed treatment' of stormwater issue put to council's top executive

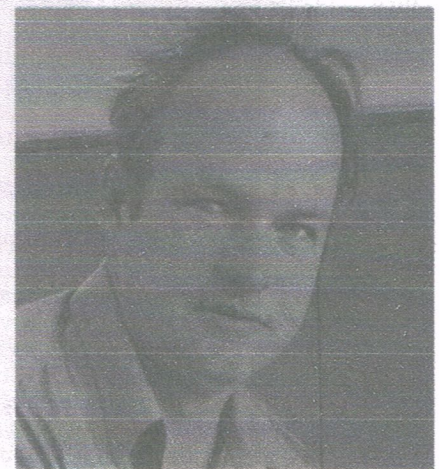
Waiheke's ward councillor Mike Lee has made a formal complaint to the chief executive officer of Auckland Council, Stephen Town, over the treatment meted out to Waiheke Local Board member and former board chair Paul Walden, his wife and children.

Late last month, *Gulf News* reported the family's difficulties getting any response from Auckland Council, Auckland Transport and Healthy Waters during a year after serious flooding of their property escalated into a legal dispute relating to allowable earthworks in the rural zone.

This "appears to be a technical, if not somewhat obscure matter in the context of this particular case of regular serious flooding", Mr Lee said.

Formerly chairman of the planning and governance watchdog Auckland Regional Council, Cr Lee said the incident was an "unhappy, all-too-typical, drawn-out affair, culminating in a rather shocking incident".

It was, he said, unprecedented in his long



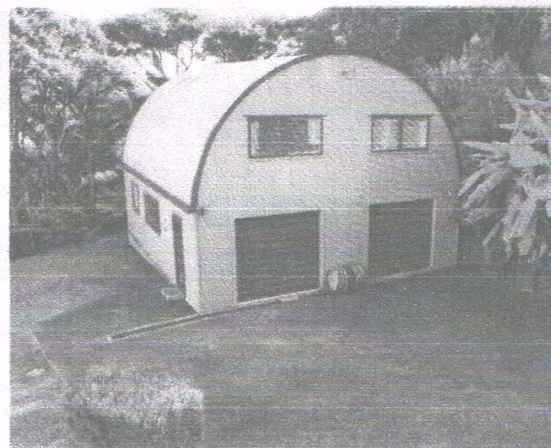
Paul Walden's predicament has led to a formal complaint to council by Cr Mike Lee.

experience in Auckland local government.

"Any reading of this account must leave the reader with grave and disquieting concerns about council responsiveness and the use of official powers against the private citizen.

"Unfortunately, the heavy-handed treatment by Auckland Council officers, who also involved the police in a raid of the Walden family home, is currently the talk of the island."

Mr Lee said it was also regrettable that the publicity was quite at odds with the formal commitments to a new, improved relationship between Auckland Council and the people of Waiheke, as the council's governing body had



The Walden's driveway, drains and landscaping when they purchased the rural property in early 2017.

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resolved and in accordance with the report by the chair of the Local Government Commission Sir Wira Gardner, *Enhancing local government for Aucklanders*.

"It was not reassuring to the Waiheke community that this raid was evidently planned to occur when Mr Walden, who was board chairman for five years until his resignation four months ago, was absent from his home at a local board meeting in the council offices, leaving his wife and children to cope with the sudden and rather frightening intrusion.

"That the council officers also called in the police was especially egregious in terms of the use of over-the-top official power, likely to be viewed as coercive and intimidating - especially in a small community.

"Moreover, as any intelligent council officer would be aware, there is potential reputational damage to any law-abiding family when neighbours witness officials in plain clothes and police involved in a raid of their home.

"Indeed, greater reputational damage when the premises raided is the home of a high-profile elected official and community leader.

That the council officers also called in the police was especially egregious in terms of the use of over-the-top official power - Cr Mike Lee

Mr Lee invited Mr Town, as the council's most senior officer and the one ultimately responsible for the actions of council staff and the nature of council staff culture to reflect, "in terms of reasonableness and natural justice" on how his own family might feel if their home was raided while he was away at work, undertaking the duties of his office.

"What would your neighbours think if the police were involved in a search of your home?"

"The months of official unresponsiveness to valid complaints, followed by a heavy-handed invasion by council officials backed by the police of the Walden family home, breaches accepted understanding of 'reasonableness' and indeed natural justice as a means to settle differences around consenting matters," he said.

Mr Lee said the original source of the problem, stormwater causing serious flooding to the Walden property, is also a serious concern to other Waiheke residents.

"A similar long running case in nearby Wilma Road is considered so sensitive that your own chief of staff (with my assistance)



Cr Mike Lee called the council's use of a search warrant involving the police unprecedented in his long experience in local government matters.

is attempting to manage it.

"It is revealing - in the context of stormwater flooding, sourced from inappropriately consented impermeable surfaces and poorly designed or poorly maintained road culverts - that among the phalanx of officers and police involved in the raid of the Walden's home, there was not one officer from Healthy Waters nor from Auckland Transport, the two agencies legally responsible for stormwater management on Waiheke Island.

"Officers from these two organization, I understand, despite the Waldens' complaints going back 18 long months, have never been near the affected property."

• Liz Waters

Council 'increasingly bizarre and Kafka-esque'

An immediate flurry of responses from local board leaders around Auckland greeted Waitemata and Hauraki Gulf Islands ward councillor Mike Lee's open letter of complaint to Auckland Council's chief executive officer Stephen Town.

The troubling issue of a search warrant for the home of Waiheke Local Board member Paul Walden after a year of unresolved stormwater issues sparked parallel stories including one where local board members and the public were told by Auckland Transport to "desist" from remedial clearance of 41 drains on a public park after three years of frustration.

The "far-reaching problem" now sees many ratepayers and residents clearing stormwater grates and mowing berms and small reserves in an attempt at "retaining and preserving pride in Auckland", said one board member. It was a lead they want the council to follow.

Another long-time Auckland local government figure described the current council as "increasingly bizarre and Kafka-esque".

"I have never heard of a council doing such a thing and, perversely, we cannot most of the time get it to respond to legitimate issues or get out of its own way. Increasingly it responds in an intensely bureaucratic way that defies commonsense," she said. • Liz Waters

Official information sought on Walden search

Gulf News lodged Local Government and Meetings Act requests relating to the search warrant issued to council officials and the search on Waiheke Local Board member Paul Walden's home

with chief executive officer Stephen Town's office in the week prior to the paper's publication of the story on 26 July. The council's response is due by Friday 17 August. •

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