

Chairperson and Community Board Members
ŌTAKI COMMUNITY BOARD

2 SEPTEMBER 2014

Meeting Status: **Public**

Purpose of Report: For Decision

RATIONALISATION OF THE I-SITES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report considers the options for rationalising the i-SITEs, outlines the views of the Stakeholder Engagement Group and seeks a recommendation from the Community Board to Council.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DECISION

- 2 This report does not trigger Council's Significance policy.

BACKGROUND

- 3 The rationale for Council providing economic development funding for the two i-SITEs at Paraparumu and Ōtaki, is that by providing visitor information services, the i-SITEs will help attract more visitors to the district, will result in increased employment in the visitor sector and an increase in the amount visitors spend with tourism businesses, (e.g. accommodation, transport, attractions) and related service businesses (e.g. retail, supermarkets, cafes).
- 4 The i-SITEs are part of an accredited national network and also provide tourism services to visitors and the local community seeking both local and national tourism information. This includes information such as travel itineraries and transport bookings (e.g. ferries and Intercity bus services).
- 5 In 2013, Council initiated an independent strategic review of the Kāpiti Visitor Information Network (the Strategic Review). The findings of the Strategic Review, included:
 - that the majority of the use of the current sites at Paraparumu and Ōtaki was by the local community rather than visitors;
 - the ratepayer cost per inquiry at the i-SITEs was \$10.70;
 - two i-SITEs in close proximity to each other was not warranted; and
 - i-SITEs still have a role, however use of digital information has an increasing role in providing for visitor information needs.
- 6 The main use of the i-SITEs by locals has been booking of bus and ferry tickets (which the Kāpiti i-SITEs do without charging additional booking fees), information on local events and activities and general 'community' information. (see Appendix 1 for a list of the current services provided from the i-SITEs)

- 7 The Strategic Review noted that *'it is confusing for ratepayers to fund the predominantly community use of the i-SITEs from economic development or tourism funding which aims to generate increase spend and employment. If the community places a high value on maintaining a subsidised bus and ferry ticketing service to help local residents travel outside the district, then this should be funded from some form of community servicing budget'*.
- 8 Following the receipt of the Strategic Review in February 2014, Council noted in the draft 2014-2015 Annual Plan that it intended to rationalise the i-SITEs during this financial year.
- 9 Two workshops were held during July and August with a Community and Visitor Stakeholder Group to seek their views and advice on rationalisation options. The terms of reference and membership of the group are attached as Appendix 2.
- 10 A decision on how Council will rationalise the i-SITEs will be made in October 2014. The recommendations of the Stakeholder Group will be one of the inputs considered as part of that decision.

CONSIDERATIONS

Issues

- 11 Ōtaki i-SITE is located in the Old Ōtaki Courthouse on Centennial Park on State Highway 1. The building was relocated to the site by Council for use as an i-SITE. It is owned by Council and is listed as a heritage building in the district plan. The internal design of the building and the need to retain the heritage features limits how the space within the building can be used. The underlying land is a memorial reserve with Open Space zoning.
- 12 The Paraparaumu i-SITE is located in a Coastlands tenancy facing Rimu Road. The current term of the lease runs to May 2015 with a right of renewal. Council needs to make a decision on whether to renew by December 2014.
- 13 The Paraparaumu site was relocated to its current location in 2010. The location was chosen prior to the Expressway replacing the Proposed Western Link road proposal and was in anticipation of Rimu Road being the main road of the Paraparaumu Town Centre. Cost of the fit out of the tenancy including signage, equipment and fittings amounted to \$105,000.00. The Strategic Review noted that there is considerable operator concern about the location.
- 14 Both sites are managed for Council by the Kāpiti Company Limited. The current term of their contract is due to finish in June 2015.
- 15 The terms of reference for the Stakeholder Group make it clear that the advice being sought from the Group did not include reconsideration of Council's decision to rationalise. The role of the Group was to provide advice on which rationalisation option they preferred. This advice is one of the matters that will inform Council's decision on the final shape of the rationalisation in October.
- 16 At the first workshop, Stakeholder Group members were provided with an overview of how the rationalisation project fitted into the wider context of Council investment in the visitor sector, the current review of the Economic Development Strategy and development of the Long Term Plan.
- 17 Staff also noted that:
 - the Kāpiti Island Gateway proposal was a feasibility study that Council jointly funded with the Department of Conservation (DOC);

- the feasibility study had identified a number of potential options which, if they were to proceed required a mixture of public and private investment;
 - that neither DOC or the Council had committed funding to develop a gateway;
 - that any consideration of future Council investment would be a matter for consideration as part of the Long Term Plan.
- 18 Staff also noted that any issues raised by the group during the workshops about Council's future investment in tourism would be passed on to the team working on the Economic Development Review.
- 19 For the i-SITE rationalisation workshops the Group was asked to focus on options that would apply to the period from 2015 to the completion of the Mackay's to Peka Peka Expressway in 2017.

Rationalisation Options

- 20 The options for rationalisation include:
- Closing one site and diverting some or all the funding to either digital information or improving the design and style of the other i-SITE.
 - Close both sites and diverting some or all the funding to digital information
 - Close both sites
- 21 Consideration for all options was given to which if any of the 'community' services currently run from the sites, could be relocated within existing Council services (e.g. libraries and service centres). Consideration was also given to working with key operators to improve the range of Kapiti wide information held at their sites.
- 22 As booking of bus and ferry tickets is one of the main services currently provided by the i-SITES, enquiries were made whether any of the other Intercity agents in Paraparaumu and Ōtaki also provided the service without additional booking fees. In addition to direct on-line bookings with Intercity, both the AA in Paraparaumu and Ōtaki Travel both provide Intercity ticketing without a booking fee. Unlike the i-SITES they are only open during the working week however, it is noted that currently only 20% of the total use of i-SITES is at weekends.
- 23 The Stakeholder Group recommendation was that the district still needs one i-SITE and that the way in which the Kāpiti story is told needs to be improved. The Group considered that a strong web digital presence is important as is enhancing the physical displays and collateral (e.g. maps & brochures) available in the remaining site. The Group also commented that it is important that the people who tell and promote the district are passionate about its attributes and attractions. The Group could accept the closure of the of the Ōtaki i-SITE if these matters were addressed
- 24 In the longer term the group indicated that post the expressway, and should development of the Kapiti Island Gateway proceed the appropriate physical location for any future i-SITE would be within that development. Prudent design of improved displays/story boards for an improved Paraparaumu i-SITE now could enable this material to transition and be relocated into any future Gateway tenancy.
- 25 Post Expressway, if a Kāpiti Island Gateway does not proceed the single Kāpiti i-SITE should be relocated to be readily accessible from the Kāpiti Road egress to the Expressway.

- 26 There was however a split view of the Group on the final wording of parts of their recommendation with equal numbers supporting one of the following two options.

<p>Options One</p> <p>The i-SITE Rationalisation Visitor and Stakeholder Community Group recommendation is that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One i-SITE/Visitor Centre is needed for Kāpiti. 2. The Group support the concept of the Kapiti Island Gateway and that if that proceeds visitor information should be provided within it. 3. In the event that the Gateway does not come to fruition, post the construction of the Mackay's to Peka Peak Expressway, a new location should be considered for the single Kāpiti iSITE which is easily accessible from the Kāpiti Road egress from the Expressway . 4. Prior to the completion of the Expressway, a single Kāpiti i-SITE should be retained at the current location of the Paraparumu i-SITE. 5. That the closure of the Ōtaki i-SITE is accepted if the way that the Kāpiti Story is told is improved, digitally and in the physical displays in the remaining i-SITE and some form of visitor information provision is retained in Ōtaki. 6. That the current funding Council provides for the Ōtaki i-SITE be redirected to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • digital communication, • improvements to the displays in the single remaining Kāpiti i-SITE; and • visitor information needs in Ōtaki
<p>Option Two - the same as Option one up to and including point 4 with the following alternate wording for points 5 and 6.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 That the closure of the Ōtaki i-SITE is accepted if the way that the Kāpiti Story is told is improved with emphasis on the individual towns and their identities, digitally and in the physical displays in the remaining i-SITE and some form of visitor information provision is retained in Ōtaki 6 That the current funding Council provides for the Ōtaki i-SITE be redirected to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhanced digital communication across the district, • improvements to the displays in the single remaining Kāpiti i-SITE emphasising the individual towns and their identities; and • visitor information needs in Ōtaki.

- 27 The Kāpiti Chamber of Commerce was unable to attend the second workshop, instead providing their written comments for the workshop consideration. Their comments indicated that the i-SITE rationalisation should take a wider perspective with the physical sites and online presence to enhance economic development rather than just tourism. As their view goes beyond the terms of reference for the i-SITE Stakeholder Group, their view has been referred to the Economic Development Strategy Working Party for its consideration.

- 28 The Ōtaki Community Board was represented as part of the Stakeholder Group along with a Otaki Business Community representative nominated by the Community Board. At the time of writing this report they supported different options of the wording of the Stakeholder Group recommendation.

Future Use of the Ōtaki Building

- 29 Some members of the Stakeholder Group indicated that the building should be retained as a Community run information/promotion centre. Consideration was not given by the Group on how this would be funded however, they were aware that there were costs and that as Council was seeking to rationalise it was unlikely to provide funding assistance.
- 30 Staff indicated that in the event that Council's decision on rationalisation subsequently reflects the view that Ōtaki close, staff would be recommending that the Ōtaki community has the opportunity to respond to an Expression of Interest on the future use of the building prior to the building being vacated.

Future Provision of the Current 'Community' Information Requests at the Ōtaki i-SITE.

- 31 The majority of the existing requests for information about community services can already be obtained from Council's existing Ōtaki Service Centre, library or the Citizen's Advice Bureau. If the i-SITE is closed it is not anticipated that increased levels of service will be needed at the existing Council facilities.
- 32 It is understood that some of the people obtaining this information from the i-SITE do so because they are either not aware that it is available from the Council services or they are not aware of where the Council services are located. Improved information at the State Highway shops about local services may address this.
- 33 Consideration could be given to replacing the wording of the current i-SITE sign with information on Ōtaki services, activities and facilities and the location of the Parapaparumu i-SITE. This will depend on the future use of the i-SITE Building and what the future user's signage requirements may be.

Future Provision of Visitor Information in Ōtaki

- 34 The Stakeholder Group considered that the future form of what visitor information provision is retained in Ōtaki should be a decision of the Ōtaki Community.
- 35 If the Council accepts the recommendation and agrees that some of the funding should be retained for this purpose, it will be recommended that the task of working with the Ōtaki Community on the form of provision be delegated to the Ōtaki Community Board.

Financial Considerations

- 36 The 2014-2015 dedicated funding to run the Ōtaki i-SITE is \$65,000 per annum. The advice of the Stakeholder Group is that the same level of funding be redirected in subsequent years to improving how the Kapiti Story is told both digitally and in displays in the Parapaparumu i-SITE.
- 37 Consideration of levels of support for visitor information from June 2015 will be discussed as part of the review of the Economic Development Strategy and development of the Long Term Plan.
- 38 Costs associated with closure of the site and running a request for an expression process for the future use of the building can be met within existing 2014-2015 budgets.

Legal Considerations

- 39 There are contractual considerations that would arise between Council and its contractor managing the i-SITEs, the Kāpiti Company, if either of the i-SITEs were to closed prior to the end of the current term of their management contract. This will not be a recommended option.
- 40 There are no other legal considerations.

Delegation

- 41 Rationalisation of the i-SITEs will alter how local visitor information services are delivered. Under the 2013-2016 Governance Structure the Community Board has the authority in Part D, Clause 10.4 to “listen, advocate and make recommendations to Council on any matter of interest or concern to the local community.”

Policy Implications

- There are no policy implications arising from this report.

Tāngata Whenua Considerations

- 42 Representatives from Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, Te Āti Awa and Ngāti Toarangatira were invited to take part in the Stakeholder Group. A separate i-SITE rationalisation report will go to Te Whakaminenga o Kāpiti in October prior to the Council meeting.

Publicity Considerations

- 43 Once Council has made a final decision on rationalisation, a press release will be issued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 44 That the Ōtaki Community Board recommends to Council that either
- a. They support the advice of the Community and Visitor Stakeholder Group that:
 - I. One i-SITE in the district is still needed;
 - II. That Ōtaki i-SITE be closed and the current funding be redirected with a portion of the funding being retained for some form of visitor information in Otaki and the rest to improving how the Kapiti Story is told both digitally and within the remaining i-SITE; and
 - III. That Council issue a request for expressions of interest in the future use of the Old Ōtaki Courthouse building prior to the i-SITE closing;
- Or
- b. They support the advice of the Community and Visitor Stakeholder Group that:
 - IV. One i-SITE in the district is still needed;

- V. That Ōtaki i-SITE be closed and the current funding be redirected with a portion of the funding being retained for some form of visitor information in Otaki and the rest to improving how the Kapiti Story is told both digitally and within the remaining i-SITE (emphasising how the story of the individual towns and their identities); and
- VI. That Council issue a request for expressions of interest in the future use of the Old Ōtaki Courthouse building prior to the i-SITE closing;

Or

- c. That the Community Board does not accept the recommendation of the Stakeholder Group and recommends that Council does not close the Ōtaki i-SITE.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Jane Hewitt
**Senior Advisor
Strategic Projects**

Stephen McArthur
**Group Manager
Strategy &
Partnerships**

Tamsin Evans
**Group Manager
Community Services**

ATTACHMENTS:

- Appendix 1 to SP 14-1278 Current inquires at the Kāpti i-SITEs
- Appendix 2 to SP-14-1278 Terms of Reference - i-SITE rationalisation Visitor and Community Stakeholder Group

Appendix 1: Current inquires at the i-SITEs

Resident inquiries:

- Intercity bookings – ferries & buses
- Local events and things to do – (especially free ones)

- Event ticketing in the Wellington regional
- Local train & bus services

- New residents – advice on local (including Council) services and facilities e.g. Kāpiti Kids Connect
- Information on health shuttles, Red Cross, Cancer Society, Citizen's Advice
- Directions – to sports facilities, services, Council offices and libraries, general street directions
- Courier drop off

Visitor inquiries:

- Intercity bookings – ferries & buses
- Local attractions and things to do. - (especially free ones)
- Brochures on walking, tramping, camping and best beaches
- Accommodation & cafes/restaurants
- General street directions within the district and other locations
- About the DOC estate – tracks, huts, camping grounds and Kāpiti Island
- Advice on things to do in adjacent regions

- Information on Freedom Camping

- Use of the internet – but generally visitors are seeking free WiFi

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference - i-SITE rationalisation Visitor and Community Stakeholder Group

Purpose:

To provide community and tourism advice and commentary to Council on rationalisation of the Kāpiti i-SITE network. Background on why council rationalising is attached as Appendix 1.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Stakeholder Group:

- To workshop the options for rationalisation and alternative provision of services currently provided from the i-SITEs;
- To provide advice on the options as one of the inputs into the decision that Council will subsequently make on the final rationalisation.

Not included in the scope:

- Not rationalising the i-SITEs

Membership:

A maximum of 14 members. Each member to have experience in or represent the:

- iwi of the district
- visitor sector
- business community
- provision of community services

Membership to include:

- 1 representative of Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki
- 1 representative of Te Āti Awa
- 1 representative of Ngāti Toa Rangatira
- 1 representative of the Kāpiti Chamber of Commerce
- 1 representative of the Department of Conservation
- 1 member of the Ōtaki Community Board
- 1 representative of the Ōtaki Business/Visitor community nominated by the Ōtaki Community Board
- 1 member of the Paraparaumu Raumati Community Board
- 1 representative of the Paraparaumu Raumati Business/Visitor community nominated by Paraparaumu Raumati Community Board
- 1 representative of i-SITE NZ
- 1 representative of Manaki Kāpiti
- 1 representative of the Tourism Action Group
- 1 member of the Waikanae Community Board
- 1 member of the Paekakariki Community Board

Remuneration:

Membership is a voluntary role, and there will be no remuneration for members' time, or attendance at meetings.

Processes and Support:

The Stakeholder Group will:

- meet at least twice. Meeting times will be structured to enable timely comment to Council staff and Council.

Secretarial support and a workshop facilitator will be provided by Council.

The role of the facilitator is to:

- facilitate a workshop that enables the Stakeholder Group to consider the options and provide robust advice;
- facilitate input from all members of the group, so that every voice is heard
- suggest ways to work with differences of views;
- where appropriate support the group to develop a consensus view of the advice that the group provides to Council.

Council will make available meeting rooms and any Council-owned presentation equipment required for meetings.

Council will provide secretarial support to the group. Staff time including secretarial and facilitator support will be met from existing Council operating budgets.

Output

By 15 August 2014 to have endorsed a written summary of workshop which reflects the advice of the group. Where there is not a consensus view on options all stakeholder views will be reflected in the summary.

Communication:

Any public statements about the Stakeholder Group will be made by the Council