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**REPORT 7**  
*(1215/12/IM)*

## **TAWA DRIVEWAYS MAINTENANCE - PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

To inform the Tawa Community Board of the outcome of the recent survey of property owners who pay for the Tawa Driveways Maintenance project and to seek support for a recommendation that is to be made to the Strategy and Policy Committee.

### **2. Executive Summary**

The Council currently provides a maintenance service on 41 specific driveways in Tawa. This is not consistent with the City's general Driveway maintenance policy which is that Council provides no assistance for driveways.

A recent survey of the affected Tawa driveway property owner's shows there remains a diversity of views about this service provided by Council. Improvements are needed, such as reporting to the property owners, and supervision of maintenance needs. Overall there was clear support, 85%, for the service to continue.

It is recommended the present maintenance service for the specific driveways in Tawa continues.

### **3. Recommendations**

Officers recommend that the Board:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Recommend to the Strategy and Policy Committee:*
  - (a) *That the maintenance service for 41 specific driveways in Tawa continues in its current form.*
  - (b) *That the rates levy and associated service levels be adjusted as may be necessary using the Council Annual Plan budget and consultation process.*
  - (c) *That the Council provide better information to affected property owners to assure them service levels are achieved.*

- 3. Acknowledge support for this proposed recommendation to the Strategy and Policy Committee*

#### **4. Background**

The Tawa Borough Council maintained 41 specific driveways before Wellington City took responsibility for the Tawa Borough on 1 November 1989. Wellington City Council identified that it could not obtain national roading subsidies for work on these driveways. Wellington City also identified that this service was not consistent with Council policy for general driveways in Wellington.

Wellington City's general policy on driveway maintenance was, and still is, 'No assistance except where specifically approved by Council on individual merit (unique circumstances must exist)'.

In 1998 the Wellington City Council agreed to continue maintaining the 41 specific driveways in Tawa on the basis of a rates levy. This decision was made following significant diversity of support amongst property owners of affected driveways.

It was acknowledged that this policy would be reviewed in 10 years time (2008).

The levy was established at \$100 per affected property per annum and has not been changed since. Over the last 10 years the cost of road maintenance contract services has increased 50%. The amount of maintenance work has generally decreased so as to operate within the funds collected for the project.

A temporary group was formed in 1997/98, comprising Councillors and Community Board members, to resolve whether some property owners should be included even though it was not their choice. Some of those property owners were made to join the scheme. It was also recognised that on 8 of the driveways there was some general public use predominantly for pedestrians as a pedestrian thoroughfare. Hence it was deemed Council should contribute the equivalent of 8 property owners from its footpath maintenance funds as a contribution to the project.

Since the scheme started in 1998 Council has resurfaced at least 28 of the 41 driveways and built one substantial retaining wall. Other work carried out has included pavement maintenance, weed spraying, vegetation cutting, sweeping, and sump cleaning. A Financial summary for the project is included as an appendix to this report.

No driveways have been added to the project since it started 10 years ago. Council was approached soon after the scheme started with requests for other driveways to enter the scheme. Council's response was that they could if they were prepared to provide back payment to when the scheme first started. This approach was probably taken to fairly manage situations where the condition of the driveways were run down.

No driveways have been withdrawn from the project. Council has always acknowledged the option of property owners to withdraw if all affected property owners on a driveway agree for their driveway to be withdrawn from the scheme.

## **RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE -**

On 20 August 2008 a questionnaire was sent out to the 258 property owners served by the 41 driveways in Tawa who pay the rates levy. A summary of the feedback is provided as follows:

43 % (110) of the property owners responded. The respondents were served by 36 of the 41 driveways.

### **i) Satisfaction with current maintenance**

67% were happy with the past driveway maintenance service provided by Council.

A common complaint of the remaining 33% was that little or no maintenance was seen to be carried out.

### **ii) Acceptance for the service to continue at an increased cost**

84% were happy with the service to continue acknowledging the levy would increase. However many tagged their support with the request that better information be supplied on how their money would be spent and evidence that the services were being supplied.

### **iii) Support to hand back responsibility to residents subject to the driveway being handed over in a very good condition**

13 % wanted this to happen.

Response to these last two questions indicate two main positions:

- (a) Most of the respondents (approximately 85%) were either happy with the service or recognised the practicality of the scheme for Council to collect the costs through the rating process. This overcomes the need for neighbours to collect money and organise the work themselves. A small portion of the respondents also felt it would not be fair for them to be fully responsible because Council had a public facility on their driveway such as an access path to another street. ( About 25% of the driveways have such a facility)
- (b) The remaining respondents (approximately 15%) wanted to withdraw from the scheme generally because they did not consider they were getting value for the levy they have paid. In no situation did all the property owners on a particular driveway respond with the desire to withdraw from the scheme.

## **5. Discussion**

The affected Tawa Driveways cover a diverse range of situations such as:

- Driveways serving between 3 and 20 properties,
- Driveways located only on road land and other driveways on private property,
- Dead end driveways and through driveways with separate entry and exits,

- Driveways which also provide pedestrian or vehicle access to other streets or Council facilities,
- Driveways without retaining walls or with adjoining retaining walls that are predominantly for adjoining public road purposes and not funded by this project and driveways with retaining walls, or needing retaining walls, which are predominantly for the driveway and which are funded by this project,
- Property owners that are served by only very short lengths of these driveways and property owners served by long lengths of driveways,
- Driveways that look like a wide public street and driveways that look like a very private driveway,
- Driveways first built to a good standard and driveways first built to a poor standard.
- Driveways with a variety of vegetation styles and associated cutting needs
- Property Owners that no longer have a need for vehicle access and property owners that have many vehicles

There were a lot of objections to paying a levy when this driveway scheme was established 10 years ago. Many of those objections still exist.

The recent survey of affected property owners also identified that several property owners were not happy with the quality and quantity of maintenance provided by the Council. Much of the criticism was constructive and will be used to make improvements to the service without serious consequences of cost. The predominant complaint indicated the need for better reporting of information to owners and better supervision/auditing processes to ensure vegetation, cleaning and minor pavement maintenance needs are being achieved.

Overall the Tawa Driveways are in good condition and the scheme is generally working well and there is very good support, 85%, for the service to continue. There would likely be strong opposition from most of the affected property owners if Council tried to end this scheme.

Most of the resurfacing of driveways was carried out earlier in the project and care is needed to not let the condition of the driveways run down. If maintenance needs are neglected this would lead to more expensive repairs at a later date and a likely overall greater cost to the project. The cost of maintenance work for roads and driveways has increased by 50% over the last 10 years. The cost of maintenance needs and associated service levels need to be carefully managed and adjusted to ensure the cost effectiveness of this service is maximised. This should be managed through the Council Annual Plan process.

Even though this scheme is inconsistent with the Council's general policy for driveways in Wellington it is a service that is wanted and should not be simply discarded for the sake of consistency. Rather it may be an opportunity for further investigation to develop a similar scheme that could be applied across the whole City. Issues that could be covered in such an investigation are:

- The scheme entry processes
- The scheme exit processes
- Scaling of the chargeable levy to reflect the length of driveway used

- Measures to manage the risks of high capital cost retaining walls/batters
- Clear Council contribution criteria where there is a clear public use benefit
- Clear Council contribution criteria where there is a clear Council liability
- Clear service levels
- Clear pegging of the levy to the cost of the agreed service levels through the annual plan review

The Tawa Community Board and Tawa Driveway Property Owners could be helpful as a sounding board on any scheme that may be investigated.

## **6. Conclusion**

Review of this Policy has identified:

- Council could improve Customer satisfaction levels, by better reporting of planned and completed works
- There is good support, 85%, for the scheme to continue
- There would be strong opposition from affected property owners if Council tried to end this scheme.
- Council needs to more actively align income and service levels for this project through the Annual Plan process

Contact Officer: *Neil D Johnstone, Planning Team Leader, Transport Assets, Infrastructure.*

## **Supporting Information**

**1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*Inform the Tawa Community Board of recommendation that is to be made to the Strategy and Policy Committee about the Tawa Driveway Maintenance Policy.*

**2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

*The project is contained in the Council Plan # C312..*

**3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*Not applicable*

**4) Decision-Making**

*Support of the Tawa Community Board is essential*

**5) Consultation**

*Affected property owners have been consulted by letter and questionnaire*

**6) Legal Implications**

*Not applicable*

**7) Consistency with existing policy**

*Based on Council decision in 1998 to maintain specific Tawa driveways and review that policy after 10 years.*

## APPENDIX – FINANCIAL SUMMARY

- A) Income and Expenses for the Tawa Driveways Maintenance Project since the project began (excludes GST):

Year	Income	Expenditure	Running balance
1998/99	\$24,000.00	\$32,946.00	-\$8,946.00
1999/00	\$24,000.00	\$25,311.70	-\$10,257.70
2000/01	\$22,578.00	\$26,811.76	-\$14,491.46
2001/02	\$23,643.00	\$23,767.00	-\$14,615.46
2002/03	\$23,643.00	\$32,178.00	-\$23,150.46
2003/04	\$23,643.00	\$28,052.95	-\$27,560.41
2004/05	\$23,643.00	\$33,947.21	-\$37,864.62
2005/06	\$23,643.00	\$18,541.00	-\$32,762.62
2006/07	\$23,643.00	\$18,829.00	-\$27,948.62
2007/08	\$23,643.00	\$22,783.00	-\$27,088.62

- B) Current budget for the Tawa Driveways Maintenance Project, 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 (excludes GST):

Street cleaning	\$ 4,000.00
Growth cutting and weed spraying	\$ 7,000.00
Routine maintenance	\$ 3,000.00
Pavement resurfacing	\$ 5,643.00
Retaining walls	\$ 0.00
Professional services	\$ 4,000.00
Total Expenditure	\$ 23,643.00