

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of Hearing of Submissions
and Further Submissions on
the Proposed Porirua
District Plan

Minute 3 – Covid Response

Introduction

1. As all PDP parties will be aware, at 11:59pm on 17 August 2021, the entire country went into Level 4 lockdown in response to a case of Covid-19 community transmission in Auckland. Since then, positive cases have been identified in Wellington, and while the lockdown in the Wellington area will be reviewed this Friday, a return to Level 1 ‘normality’ appears unlikely in the short-term.
2. The purpose of this Minute is to update PDP parties on how the hearing process will proceed given the current uncertain outlook.
3. The key message is that we do not intend to defer the hearing but rather, as foreshadowed in Minute 2 might need to occur, we will alter our hearing process to accommodate the need to ensure that it proceeds safely and in accordance with all relevant central Government directions.

Timetabling

4. As directed in Minute 2, Hearing Stream 1 Section 42A Officer Reports will be released contemporaneously with this Minute. All submitters will receive an email from the Hearing Administrator confirming their availability and providing a link to the Council website from where the reports may be downloaded.
5. All timetabling steps for submitters summarised at paragraph 95 of Minute 2 will remain in place.
6. All parties should proceed on the basis that the Hearing Stream 1 hearing will commence on 27 September.

7. It appears unlikely that the Hearing Stream 1 Hearing Panel would need to undertake site visits in preparation for this hearing, but obviously, the Hearing Panel will not be convening in person, whether for site visits or for any other purpose while the Wellington area is at Level 4 lockdown. If we have to, the Hearing Panel will undertake site visits after the hearing, once levels have been relaxed.

Hearing Stream 1 Arrangements

8. Participants in Hearing Stream 1 should expect that they will be heard virtually, most likely via Zoom. Instructions on how to use Zoom, along with virtual hearing protocols, will be provided in a further minute. We are aware of other district plan hearing processes that have been successfully conducted 'virtually', and we will be guided by the experience gained in those other processes. For submitters who do not have access to the internet, and who have requested to be heard, the Hearing Panel will 'hear' the submitter via an audio link only.
9. If necessary, the entire hearing will be conducted virtually. However, if alert levels are relaxed sufficiently to enable the Hearing Panel, at least, to convene, we propose to minimise Covid related risks by having the Hearing Panel physically present in the Council Chambers, with other hearing participants attending virtually.
10. As far as possible, all other aspects of the hearing will proceed as provided for in Minute 2.
11. Closer to the hearing commencement, we will issue another Minute confirming how the hearing will proceed in more detail.

Other Hearing Process Steps

12. In Minute 2, we advised that a Schedule would be prepared showing the allocation of submission points to specific hearings. A schedule showing the allocation of submission points for Hearing Stream 1 is now available on the PDP Hearings webpage. Schedules for the balance of hearing streams will follow as soon as possible, likely in stages. You will be advised when the Schedules are updated.
13. In Minute 2, we also advised that the Council was in the process of establishing a dedicated hearing portal. Work on that continues. The portal is currently being tested and I expect that it will 'go live' in the near future. Again, you will be advised when that is the case. I expect that that will certainly be before the Hearing Stream 1 hearing commences on 27 September. In the meantime, you can access all hearing materials at <https://porirua.govt.nz/your-council/city-planning-and-reporting/district-plan/proposed-district-plan/>.

Conclusion

14. This is obviously an unsettling time for everyone. The Hearings Panel is going to do its best to ensure that the disruptions to hearing participants are minimised. It is understood that this will create challenges for all participants. If you are having difficulty complying with the hearing directions, please talk to the Hearing Administrator. She and we will do our best to find a solution that works for all participants.
15. At this point, we are only looking as far ahead as Hearing Stream 1. At the conclusion of that hearing, we will review where we are with Covid related restrictions and how the subsequent hearings should be managed in light of the position at the time.
16. We would ask for everyone's patience and co-operation to assist the Hearings Panel in the meantime. In the short-term, we look forward to an easing of Level 4 lockdown restrictions as soon as practically possible.

Dated 26 August 2021



**Trevor Robinson
Chair
For the Proposed Porirua District Plan Hearings Panel**