

5. CELL SITE APPLICATION PROCESS

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The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to clarify the delegated authority of officers that was sought from the Council in April 2003.

CONTEXT OF REPORT

When the Property and Major Projects Committee took over the approval process of cell sites, as a result of the disestablishment of the Cell Sites Subcommittee in 2002, a seminar to brief the Property and Major Projects Committee on the approval process for micro and macro sites on Council land was held on 4 April 2003.

Through the seminar Councillors were advised that the process and procedures for dealing with cell site applications were established and documented in a protocol that was developed in conjunction with both Telecom and Vodafone in 2001. However, the Cell Sites Subcommittee (now disestablished) could meet as and when required to process applications, whereas the Property and Major Projects Committee has fixed meeting dates and therefore did not provide the degree of flexibility that was previously available in terms of processing. Council officers therefore sought changes on some minor aspects of the protocol to enable this process to once again be streamlined and to improve communication, efficiencies and customer service.

As a result the Council agreed to a change in the process and the Property Manager was given approval to approve Step 12 of the Protocol (attached) which is where the Council advises the telecommunications company if they have any issues with the proposed site. Under this delegation officers were still to report to the Property and Major Projects Committee as per step 14 for final approval. However, at the time it was the intention of officers and the Committee that they be given delegated authority at step 12 and step 14 therefore removing the need to report to the Committee on low impact sites on city streets assets.

As a result of the understanding of the protocol as outlined above a number of sites have been approved by officers since April 2003. These should be reported to the Property and Major Projects Committee for approval. Therefore this report serves to achieve that for the sites listed below. A resolution is contained in clause 8 in Part C of this report.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Retrospective Ratification

The low impact sites requiring retrospective approval that have been erected on City Streets assets since April 2003 are as follows:

- Barrington Street, adjacent to Barrington Park and the shopping centre
- Clyde Road, adjacent to the Ilam shopping centre
- Centaurus Road, adjacent to Sloan Terrace
- Fendalton Road, adjacent to the intersection of Deans and Harper Avenues
- Galbraith Avenue, adjacent to Sullivan Park.

Review of Delegations

Council officers believe that in order to streamline the protocol further it would be beneficial to clarify the resolution passed in April 2003 thereby removing the need for Council officers to report back to the Committee for final ratification. Approval for macro (high) impact sites will continue to be reported to the Property and Major Projects Committee under the protocol and as intended in 2003.

Under the current protocol agreement that Vodafone and Telecom have with the Council, cell sites being erected on poles up to 10 metres in height on a City Streets asset have been deemed to be low impact sites and are approved by the Facility Assets Manager (formerly the Property Manager). In instances of cell site applications above this height it has been considered that they are high impact sites and under the protocol they are reported through the Property and Major Projects Committee. In both instances the telecommunications company must obtain the necessary resource consents.

Staff believe that the impact between a 10 metre and 20 metre pole is not significant, particularly in terms of upgrades and therefore consider it would be more efficient to review the delegations to officers in considering the applications that will inevitably arrive from Woosh and the current applications received as a result of the proposed upgrade for Vodafone. Delegation is being sought to approve cell poles up to 20 metres in height.

There have been significant advances in technology in recent times with the new design for cell sites in many instances to be located on light poles with slimline antennas attached unobtrusively to the pole and mounted inside a fibreglass sleeve.

It is considered that despite the fact that the proposed upgrade of Vodafone and the requirements of Woosh to erect poles of 15 metres in height, and in some instances up to 20 metres in height, these will visually still be of low to medium impact particularly given that they are predominantly located on light poles.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the lack of clarity with existing delegation a number of cell sites have been approved by officers which required a Committee resolution, retrospective rectification is therefore sought. As the Property and Major Projects Committee has delegated authority to approve all applications to install cell sites on Council land and infrastructure a resolution is contained in clause 8 of this report under Part C.

The protocol for approving cell sites was developed in conjunction with Telecom and Vodafone as a means by which all parties know what is expected at each step and to implement a smooth running process. As mentioned earlier the Standing Committee timetables are much more fixed and accordingly less flexible. The resolutions expected by officers and the Property and Major Projects Committee to achieve this were not clear and needs tidying up.

As evidenced by the report in this agenda that attends to Vodafone's proposed upgrade of a number of their existing sites there is new demand in the telecommunications market for higher poles. The upgrade proposal is detailed more specifically in that report but essentially involves replacing existing street light poles with higher poles (up to 20 metres) that are still considered low impact. It is therefore proposed that the delegated authority to the Facility Assets Manager be extended to enable these new types of applications to be efficiently dealt with.

Committee

Recommendation: That the Facility Assets Manager be given authority to approve low impact cell sites on street assets up to 20 metres in height that comply with the new design.