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Springston South Reserve Committee to be discharged

The Selwyn District Council has unanimously decided to discharge the Springston South Reserve Committee because of governance issues creating heightened community tensions.

In a public excluded part of last week's Selwyn District Council's meeting, the Chief Executive Paul Davey presented a report which outlined key issues leading to his recommendation that the committee be discharged.

These issues included: Lack of consultation; allegations of favouritism; disorganisation; allowing illegal structures to be built on the reserve; failure to prepare and provide up to date financial accounts; lack of progress on the preparation of Activity Management Plans; the failure to oversee completion of reserve designation issues; and the failure to address and resolve ongoing Building Act compliance issues.

Mr Davey was also concerned that there seemed to be a general reluctance to adhere to democratic processes.

"The behaviour and actions of the committee, and the complaints which followed have consumed an inordinate amount of staff time and resource. Council has made repeated attempts to encourage the committee to work in a constructive and accountable manner, but that advice has largely been ignored.

"Each of these events on their own gives sufficient reason to consider discharging the committee. However, the multiplicity of issues we are facing in that community, particularly in relation to its governance, clearly show that the Council needs to take back the control of the reserve," Mr Davey says.

The reserve was vested in the 1800s and was administrated until 1989 by the Department of Lands and Survey/Department of Conservation via a Domain Board. The 1989 reorganisation of Local Authorities included, among other things, the abolition of Domain Board. In the instance of the Springston South Domain Board the responsibility for governance transferred to the Selwyn District Council.

The Council in the early 1990s chose to adopt a delegated committee philosophy for the governance of reserves including the Springston South Reserve. A generic constitution was drawn up to provide a framework for the operation of the Committee and to all intents and purposes the previous governance model was intended to continue.

The responsibilities for the Springston South Reserve Management Committee were larger than the average committee, including administration of the records in relation to the licences to occupy, the collection of rental, and the funding and operation on a day to day basis of the water and wastewater schemes.

“Delegations and accountabilities are generally empowering of a committee and its community but in this instance they were not being fulfilled by the committee in a timely, responsible and accountable manner,” he says.

He highlighted that the Council decision did not necessarily need to be a permanent solution.

Councillors requested that staff come back to them with further information about the way this community could be governed in the future.

Mayor Kelvin Coe, Councillor Lindsay Philps and Chief Executive Paul Davey met with the committee last night to inform them of the Council decision, which took effect immediately.

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For further comment, contact Paul Davey, Chief Executive, 03 347 2805, paul.davey@selwyn.govt.nz.