

Piha R&R response to recent comments on Piha Community Facebook site.

The Piha R & R feels it cannot allow the derogatory comments posted recently on the Piha Community Facebook site to go unanswered. A number of damaging allegations and misleading statements have been made about the R & R with little knowledge or regard for truth or accuracy. But it is also clear that many involved in the 'discussion' are puzzled about what is going on, can find no clear answers to their questions in the midst of this confused dialogue, and are calling for an end to the hostility.

We aim to answer those questions, and join the call for an end to the disharmony (some have called it **toxicity**) that has pervaded our community for far too long.

We now outline recent events. With the active involvement and help of the Auckland Council and the WRLB (Waitakere Ranges Local Trust Board), agreements were reached between the R & R and the Library Trust that were intended to form the basis of a sublease. The pivotal terms and agreements reached at a December meeting between the Council, WRLB, R & R and the Trust, included the WRLB meeting costs of the library building insurance, the scope of uses of the library building, a contribution by the Trust of \$50 per month (suggested by the trust representative as being affordable), and security of tenure for the library. After that meeting the Trust sought, and obtained, further financial assistance from the WRLB in the form of payment of its chattels insurance.

Recent events are as follows:

1. On 26 January 2018 (*after* the difficulties of the R&R's AGM) the Library Trust forwarded a settlement proposal, which was intended to clear the way forward to a sublease between the Trust and the R & R. It was signed by the Chair of the Library Trust. One of the settlement terms read: *"That the Trust agree to make an annual donation/contribution of \$500 to a maintenance fund at the end of each financial year. This is an alternative to a monthly rent. The R&R have stated the "rent" was to cover maintenance, and so we consider it better to be explicit."*

In a covering email, trustee Glenda Northey wrote:-

"Please find attached a letter to the R & R about resolving the library stand-off. We have not met with the R&R about this but have communicated via a series of emails during the week.

We hope it covers all issues now and resolution can be made. If these are unacceptable to the R&R then we will need to plan another meeting with Council.

Many thanks.

Glenda"

2. The R & R immediately responded and confirmed its agreement to all of the Trust's settlement terms.
3. In February, and in reliance on the above, the Auckland Council drafted a Head Lease (between the Council and R&R) and a proposed Sublease (between the R&R and the Trust). Sublease terms were as had been agreed per the Trust's 26 January letter. Copies of documents were sent to both parties, with a deadline for response.
4. The R & R confirmed its approval of both documents (Head lease and Sublease) before the March 2 deadline set by Council for both parties.
5. The Trust then wrote to the R & R and sought to alter and/or clarify some terms of the sublease. This included seeking enlargement of the permissible uses of the library building. The Council

has limited the use of the building to “*Community library services and such other library-related purposes as the Landlord (the Council) may approve in writing.*” By return letter the R & R correctly explained that it could not grant a larger/different scope of uses of the building than had been granted by the Council in the Head Lease. The R & R also addressed a few other matters that had been raised. The Library Trust did not forward any further comment. Significantly the Trust raised no objection to the Maintenance Contribution of \$500 p.a.

6. In a 9th March phone discussion between Glenda Northey and R&R Vice-President H. Bouchier, a GST enquiry about the Exterior Maintenance Contribution was resolved, and in the course of that call Ms. Northey confirmed that the Trust would pay \$500 p.a. The draft Sublease expressly states that this sum is payable by the Trust as an Exterior Maintenance Contribution, and this reflected the Trust’s January settlement proposal.
7. On 22 March, being the day of the WRLB meeting which had expected to approve the Lease and Sublease, the Library Trust wrote to say it would not sign the sublease. By way of explanation, the Trust (surprisingly) referred to historical issues that *pre-dated* its 26 January settlement proposals.

That is the factual account of events. It is important to add that the lease and sublease proceedings have been led by the Auckland Council. Both the Council and the WRLB have contributed a considerable amount of time and attention to the lease effort.

The R & R has worked hard and patiently for many years trying to reach a settlement with the Library Trust. The considerable recent efforts could, and should, have led to a resolution of all matters. The preferable pathway to resolving any issues is through dialogue between the parties. It is not helpful to have the R & R unfairly denigrated in a public forum such as a public Facebook site.

We have also noted that there are many voices of reason among the participants, who genuinely seek clarification about these events. For them especially, we have sought to provide answers. We acknowledge and thank those voices for pursuing answers.

The R & R Committee is made up of a wonderful group of dedicated individuals who commit an extraordinary amount of voluntary time to ensuring that the exceptional character of Piha is preserved for the enjoyment of us all, and keeping it a wonderful place to live, even if much of our work may go unnoticed.

Like everyone, we highly value the library services, and recognise the voluntary work and dedication of the librarians, including those who have dedicated a significant part of their lives to the library. Without the dedication of librarians stretching back many decades, Piha would not have a library service.

We also recognise that there are historical grievances surrounding the library building and believe that these are better addressed through constructive and respectful dialogue. We are much encouraged by the words of the Chair of the Library Trust, Ella Ussher, who stated in her 26 January settlement proposal, “*However, the Trust wishes to keep the needs of the community paramount and so not wish to compromise the lease renewal any further. The Trust acknowledges the Council’s expectation that the issue should be resolved forthwith.*”