

NEWS

Birth centre awaits decision

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A MOVE to start a birth centre allowing women to give birth in a home setting hangs in the balance.

Wellington's town planning commissioner Cr Jenny Brough recommended last month a proposal by the Birth and Beyond organisation to establish a centre at 38 Owen Street, Newtown. But a full city council meeting overturned her decision.

The proposal has returned to a full council meeting.

Replying to councillors' questions, Birth and Beyond organiser Mrs Pamela Skelton, a midwife, said the centre planned to handle 50 to 75 births a year.

Under legislation, the centre was allowed to take only one woman at a time. So a problem still to be resolved was the possibility of two women wanting to use the centre at the same time, she said.

Because the house was in a residential neighbourhood, noisy women severely affected by labour would be transferred to a proper hospital.

The mayor, Sir Michael Fowler, said aspects of the application worried him, and

he moved it be declined. But Cr Joe Aspell objected, asking that councillors reserve judgment and discuss the matter in private. This view was supported by other councillors and agreed to bring down a recommendation for next Wednesday's monthly council meeting which could debate a decision in public.

Cr Keith Spry, reserves committee chairman, said a major tree-planting proposal and money needed to finance it would be discussed by his committee next month. His disclosure came during discussion on the council's role in assisting the Labour Department on employment schemes.

Cr Rosemary Young Rouse said she was looking forward to the planting idea and wanted Wellington's streets to be green with plants.

The meeting decided to refer the question of the council's Glasgow leases to the finance advisory committee to bring down recommendations. The leases are for 21-year periods on land reclaimed by the council round the turn of the century.

Birth centre request lives

Sept '81

WOMEN wanting to have babies in a home-like setting will get another chance to put their case to Wellington city councillors.

The council last night overturned a recommendation from its town planning commissioner, Cr Jenny Brough, that Birth and Beyond be refused permission to operate a birth centre in a house at 38 Owen Street, Newtown.

Birth and Beyond want to cater for women who prefer to give birth away from the clinical atmosphere of a maternity ward. The house is owned by the Hospital Board.

But Cr Brough said though the group's objectives were laudable, such a facility was incompatible with residential zoning, and the particular house was situated too close to neighbours for the proposed use.

Others had different ideas. Cr Les Paske said the project, which was unique in New Zealand, had the approval of the medical association, and he did not consider it should be turned down because of the objections.

Cr Elisabeth Campbell said the centre might be a new concept in Wellington but not in other countries. "There are a lot of them in Britain and America and probably elsewhere."

Cr Hazel Bibby said some people had meetings at their homes every night of the week and the car parking was not a valid objection against the centre proceeding.

And Cr Rosslyn Noonan noted that neither local residents nor the Newtown Residents' Association were opposed to the centre.

But Cr Ian Lawrence said women often had to arrive at birth establishments at the oddest hours, sometimes 3, 4 or 5am.

Mayor Sir Michael Fowler suggested the group could consult the Hospital Board for a more suitable property, and supported Cr Brough.

The meeting voted against the recommendation, and Sir Michael said the matter would be re-heard by a full council.

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