



Bye-bye Burgess:

With no money to pay for an expensive upgrade the New Plymouth District Council is likely to sell Burgess House for removal or demolition. The home was gifted to the council in 1936.

Photo: THOMAS BUSBY/FAIRFAX NZ

Move on the cards for Burgess House

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The final nail needs only to be banged in next month to start the funeral of New Plymouth's historic Burgess House.

Gifted to the city in 1936 along with five hectares of grounds, the Junction Rd (SH3) building's future has been uncertain since its commercial tenant moved out in July.

Options included a \$700,000 upgrade to attract another commercial tenant, removal or demolition.

Now a New Plymouth District Council report has all but guaranteed councillors will next month decide to put the house up for removal – a decision that could net them up to \$80,000 to cover the cost of replanting the land as part of the Burgess Park reserve.

The inevitability of their decision lent an air of sadness to the second to last agenda item at Tuesday's policy com-

mittee meeting. Councillor Lance Girling-Butcher, whose grandfather designed the house, conceded it was time for it to go.

"I just hope someone can refurbish it and afford to restore it to its former glory," he said.

Cr Craig McFarlane compared the building and the cost of maintaining it, or spending up to \$700,000 to upgrade it, to a large seabird.

"The way things are, this is an albatross around the neck of every ratepayer. We are only going to defer the eventual outcome if we put band-aids on it," he said.

Dean Jones, of Central House Movers, said the size and condition of the building was such that it could be moved to anywhere in the North Island.

"There are quite a few people who are into that type of thing.

"You might get anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 but you can't really put a price on it. Whoever falls in love with it

the most will get it," Mr Jones said.

Selling the house and land as a package was also an option but would require the Minister of Conservation to revoke the reserve classification of that part of the land.

Council property manager Peter Hancock told councillors such a move would be undesirable as the council would lose control over what happened to the land and building.

Should councillors in April agree to the removal, Mr Hancock said they would move to get it on the market as soon as possible. Burgess Park House is not listed with the Historic Places Trust nor recorded as a heritage building in the District Plan.

The council received eight public submissions, four supporting disposal, three for retention and one not indicating either way.

The land and building was gifted as a reserve by former mayor Charles Burgess and his wife Ann.