

Report 11.239
Date 25 May 2011
File SP/04/04/03

Committee Council
Author Chair, Annual Plan 2011/12 Hearings Committee

Report of the Annual Plan 2011/12 Hearings Committee

1. Purpose

This report outlines the recommendations of the Annual Plan 2011/12 Hearings Committee to the Council on the Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12, related policies and an amendment to the LTCCP, arising from the consideration of written and oral submissions.

2. Significance of the decision

The subject matter of this report is part of a decision making process that will lead to the Council making a decision of high significance within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. The decision making process is explicitly prescribed for by section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 and includes use of the special consultative procedure.

3. Background

The Annual Plan 2011/12 Hearings Committee met on 19 and 20 May 2011 to hear oral submissions and consider all written and oral submission received:

- Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12
- Proposal to amend the Treasury Risk Management Policy contained in the Regional Council's 2009-2019 Long Term Council Community Plan and to invest in New Zealand Local Government Funding Agency Limited (proposal to join the LGFA)
- Proposed Resource Management Charging Policy
- Proposed Dangerous Dams Policy.

Table 1 shows the number of submissions received.

Table 1. Number of submissions received.

	Number of written submissions	Number of oral submissions
Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12	263 ¹	36
Proposal to join the LGFA	86	1
Proposed Resource Management Charging Policy	70	2
Proposed Dangerous Dams Policy	81	2

4. Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12

4.1.1 Rates

Key themes raised in the written submissions were:

- majority support for the proposed rates.
- support was often conditional on Greater Wellington delivering the improvements promised, particularly in regard to improved rail services.
- issues of affordability of rates, having consideration for those on a fixed income and the need to be prudent.
- the need to demonstrate value for money, make savings, do less with more and focus on core services rather than “nice-to-haves”.
- a number of submitters commented on the variation of rates charges across the region.

No additional matters were raised in oral submissions.

After consideration of the matters raised in the submissions the Committee recommends to the Council to amend the Chair’s Foreword to be consistent with the rest of the document and clearer that the rates increase does not include GST.

4.1.2 Transport

Key themes raised in the written submissions were:

- majority support for the regional rail package because of improvements in service. Opposition to the regional rail package mostly related to objecting to an increase in rates or questioning of the need for ownership of rail infrastructure.

¹ This includes 6 late submissions accepted by the Committee at the hearing but not included in the summary of submissions and responses

- questions around detail of the regional rail package such as the efficiency of refurbishing of the Ganz Mavag units as opposed to replacing them with new trains and ongoing costs of maintenance of both rolling stock and stations.
- dissatisfaction with the current level of service provided with the rail system.
- requests for a range of local specific service improvements to both rail and bus services, including additional services to Otaki and Masterton.
- support for and promotion of initiatives to increase walking and cycling, in particular a group of submissions sought an off-road cycle and pedestrian facility on State Highway 2 between Ngauranga and Petone.
- both support and opposition to a future light rail system in Wellington City
- the affordability of public transport fares
- requests for the introduction of integrated and electronic ticketing.

Oral submissions reflected these same themes.

4.1.3 Water supply

Key themes raised in written submissions were:

- the need for resilience in the water supply, especially with the risk of earthquakes.
- mixed views about how Greater Wellington should meet future water demands. Many submissions sought an increased focus on water conservation and demand management activities, others supported a new water storage lake.
- a number of submissions opposed fluoridation of the water supply.

No additional matters were raised in oral submissions.

4.1.4 Safety and flood protection

Key themes raised in written submissions were:

- support for safety and flood protection activities.
- some disappointment in the delay or deferral of flood protection infrastructure projects and requested that this work be accelerated.
- a group of submitters disputed the accuracy of the current flood hazard maps for the Wainuiomata River and reassessment of the flood hazard in the 2011/12 financial year.
- the need for coordinated civil defence.

In oral submissions concerns were also raised about the accuracy of current flood hazard maps for the Mangaroa river. A late submission included a request for the addition of lights to the Hutt River Trail. In their oral submission, Friends of the Otaki River added that while their request for funding was for the 2012/13 year they require an earlier decision for planning purposes.

The Committee noted that the issue of flood hazard maps for the Wainuiomata River will be considered by the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee on 23 June 2011, and subsequently by Council on 29 June as part of the consideration of the 2011/12 Annual Plan.

4.1.5 Resource management

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- general support for resource management activities, particularly development of the regional plan and the feasibility study for the Wairarapa Water Use Project.

No additional matters were raised in oral submissions.

4.1.6 Regional sustainable development

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- support for Greater Wellington completing climate change and water strategies. Some submitters wanted a greater focus on implementation actions.
- mixed views on initiatives relating to the Wellington Regional Strategy. Some submitters supported things such as the Genuine Progress Index and Grow Wellington, others did not.

Oral submissions reflected the same themes.

After consideration of the matters raised in the submissions the Committee recommends to the Council that text under the activity of Regional Resilience is amended to “Develop strategies for business and community resilience to issues such as climate change and water” to be clearer about the focus of these strategies.

4.1.7 Parks and forests

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- acknowledgement and support of Greater Wellington’s purchase of Baring Head
- concerns about extending the parks network without increasing the parks budget and the impact this would have on park assets.
- concerns about a decrease in the budget for ranger services.

Oral submissions reflected the same themes. Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park brought to the attention of the committee the formation of the “Alliance of Environmental Friends and Guardians in the Wellington region” umbrella group.

An oral submitter presented on the concept of using wood waste from Greater Wellington’s forestry operations for electricity generation.

4.1.8 Land management

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- general support for land management activities.
- a preference for Greater Wellington to maintain, if not extend, biodiversity projects.

No additional matters were raised in oral submissions.

4.1.9 Community

Key issues raised in the written submissions were:

- a variety of matters around governance and representation, but there was no overall theme.
- support and opposition to iwi internships in fairly equal numbers.

No additional matters were raise in oral submissions.

5. **Proposal to join the Local Government Funding Agency**

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- majority support for the proposal.
- many submitters did not fully understand the proposal.
- opposition to the proposal mostly related to: fear of the joint and several guarantee, doubts about the savings possibilities, general opposition to councils having any involvement in CCTOs, the additional costs associated with running the entity.

An oral submitter questioned the officer’s comment in Attachment 2 to report 11.196 that lower interest rates could be achieved via the LGFA, putting pressure on other lending institutions to match the rates offered by the LGFA.

6. **Proposed Resource Management Charging Policy**

Key themes from the written submissions were:

- over 90% of submissions were received from residents living in urban parts of the region. Only two submissions were received from consent holders.
- the main concern of opponents was affordability and raising the charge out rate in these challenging economic times.

Three specific requests were made by Federated Farmers:

- a. that the consents process is further streamlined and that opportunity for bulk processing of consent applications is explored further.
- b. that consideration be given to a separate application fee for replacement discharge to land consents.
- c. that an additional compliance category be created that provides for agricultural discharges to be inspected once every three years where there is a good compliance history.

After consideration of the submissions the Committee recommends to the Council that the principles in the Policy are amended to reflect that Greater Wellington is committed to further streamlining the resource consent processing and that opportunities for bulk processing of resource consent applications are being explored.

7. Proposed Dangerous Dams Policy

Key issues raised in the written submissions were:

- majority support for the proposed policy.
- opposition to the policy was based on: perceptions of the policy leading to an increase in rates, concerns about the policy being a money making exercise at the expense of farmers, adding another layer of red tape, or being unnecessary.
- concerns about a lack of clarity around key terms and processes.

After consideration of the submissions the Committee recommends to the Council that a number of amendments are made to the policy for the purpose of enhanced clarity about key terms and processes. The Committee recommends the policy is amended to:

- clarify which actions incur costs for the dam owner by adding a new section.
- include the definitions for medium and high potential impact dams from the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2008.
- state how new dams are identified and when they will be assessed.
- remove references to 'potentially' dangerous dams.

- clarity is added to timeframes for information requests where appropriate.
- clarify that Greater Wellington will make contact with the dam owner before undertaking a further assessment of a dam by deleting the words “make every attempt” from section 6.3.
- reflect that the Policy will not come into effect until:
 - a. three months after the Building (Dam Safety) Regulations 2008 come in to force, and
 - b. regulations prescribing the criteria and standards to determine dangerous, earthquake-prone and flood-prone dams are gazetted.
- note that the Policy will not be reviewed when regulations come into force, but simply become operative three months later.
- indicate that any changes to the Building Act 2004 (in particular changes to the definition of large dam) will not require the Policy to be reviewed.

8. Recommendations

That the Council:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Agrees to amend the Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12 as recommended in paragraphs 4.1.1 and 4.1.6.***
4. ***Notes the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee will consider the Wainuiomata River Flood Hazard Maps at its meeting on 23 June 2011, and that any proposed amendments to the Proposed Annual Plan 2011/12 will be considered by Council on 29 June.***
4. ***Agrees to the Proposal to amend the Treasury Risk Management Policy contained in the Regional Council’s 2009-2019 Long Term Council Community Plan and to invest in New Zealand Local Government Funding Agency Limited (proposal to join the LGFA).***
5. ***Agrees to amend the Proposed Resource Management Charging policy as recommended in part 6 of this report.***
6. ***Agrees to amend the Proposed Dangerous Dams Policy as recommended in part 7 of this report.***

Report approved by:

Cr Fran Wilde
Chair, Annual Plan 2011/12
Hearings Committee