

Report 11.626
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Committee Council
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Regional Council Centre seismic evaluation update

1. Purpose

To provide the Council with updated information about the seismic investigations for the Regional Council Centre, Wellington.

2. The decision-making process and significance

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

2.1 Significance of the decision

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking into account the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

3. Background

For many years, Greater Wellington has been improving the resilience of its infrastructure, particularly its water supply assets. Another example is design work currently underway for a new Masterton office, though the reasons for a replacement are more than just resilience.

In October 2010, it was decided appropriate to check the expected performance of the Regional Council Centre building, Wakefield Street in a major seismic event. Spencer Holmes, consulting engineers were engaged for this. Unfortunately, the analysis was delayed several months due to the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, when considerable engineering and other resources were dedicated to the aftermath of the event.

4. Regional Council Centre seismic assessment

A report was received from the consultants at the end of June 2011. Councillors and staff were briefed at the time. A copy of the executive summary is attached. The building was designed to the earthquake codes of the time (1980s) but it is not up to the standard of the current design code. Taken as a whole, the Regional Council Centre (RCC) building is not expected to be classified as an earthquake prone building. Bore hole data for checking the foundation design was not available and this created some uncertainty regarding this aspect of the building performance.

Subsequently, two bore holes were drilled in Pringle Lane next to the building and material samples tested. The material at the level the piles are founded is satisfactory to support the mass of the building. However, there is some less dense material beneath the floor slab. This could be remediated at the time any upgrading work is carried out. On balance, based on the best advice received at this point, it is not considered appropriate to immediately vacate the building.

5. Briefing of staff and Councillors

Informing staff and Councillors was considered crucial. All staff in the RCC building were offered the opportunity to attend a briefing by the Chief Executive outlining the findings of the report. This followed written communication with the staff. In addition, those staff who required a more comprehensive technical briefing were offered the opportunity to meet with the consulting engineers to consider the report. Councillors were also briefed by the Chief Executive. Staff have had access to the consulting engineers' executive summary.

6. Upgrading work

Spencer Holmes has identified, but have not yet designed possible upgrading work. It is expected the work could result in the structure being in excess of 67% but less than 100% of the current code. This relates to an Importance Level 2 structure, which means that after a Wellington fault movement type event, the building would be standing but may not be available as a workplace. For a Council building to be serviceable post the earthquake, it needs to be designed to Importance Level 4. This is the standard for the proposed Council building in Masterton.

7. Next steps

In order to carry out upgrading work, there will be considerable disruption to staff and the Council functions during the process. Spencer Holmes as a next step will schedule what the work may entail, approximate cost, time frame and possible end result in terms of the current building code. This then enables the Council to consider the process before making any decision to proceed with design work to upgrade the RCC building or consider other options. It is expected this work will be completed between mid February and mid March 2012. Note that a more precise estimate of the cost of upgrading work will not be available until after the design work is complete and a construction method agreed with the Council.

8. Communication

No further communication is required. Staff and tenants of the building have been kept informed of the process.

9. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*
- 3. Notes that a further report will be available in February or March 2012.*

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Attachment 1 – Executive Summary from Spencer Holmes