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Report to the Environment Committee
From Dr Jane Bradbury, Divisional Manager, Environment

Environment Division: Proposed Operating Plans 2000-2010

1. Purpose

To give an overview of the proposed operating plans for the Environment Division.

2. Overview

The ten year budgets for the Division have been directed by the following:

- The state of the environment report. This tells us where we are doing well with environmental care, and where we still have work to do. In addition, it highlights that in many areas we still do not have sufficient information to make a judgement.
- The environmental education/communication strategy. This strategy has three components: *Learnwell* which focuses on schoolchildren; *Community Connections* which involves the community in practical environmental programmes; and *Business Bridges* which works with small to medium businesses to improve environmental practices.
- The Regional Policy Statement and regional plans. We have an obligation to carry out the methods contained in these documents, especially as they were developed in close consultation with the community.
- Councillors' desire to invest in the environment and move towards a more sustainable region.

Since the inception of the Resource Management Act 1991, the Division has been pre-occupied in carrying out its statutory responsibilities. The Regional Policy Statement and regional plans took a lot of time and resources. We have concentrated on improving our consents processing systems and our compliance monitoring. All these activities have been underpinned by a strong customer service focus.

I hope that we have been successful in these areas.

However, by necessity we have been inward looking with our efforts being directed at our systems and planning deadlines and getting our policy framework firmly in place.

We have now reached the next phase of our work. I often refer to this as the “doing” phase. The Division is now strongly committed to “making a difference” by working with sections of the community to promote and bring about environmental care.

The departmental operating plans reflect this next phase. We have kept staff resources almost constant; it is the nature of the work that will change. The only additions are three staff members for the education strategy – one with special responsibility for the *Business Bridges* programme – an area where we currently are lacking in expertise. In one sense the other two staff members are not new, as the Environmental Education Co-ordinator was approved last year, and the Schools Officer is already working on a part-time basis. There is also an additional person in pollution response.

3. **Budget Implications**

Councillors will be aware that the “doing” phase will mean a budget increase which is small relative to the Council’s total budget, but which is a significant increase in the Division’s budget. Any increases in budget are consistent with the spreadsheet that was presented at the Environment Division’s budget workshop for Councillors, and reflect the deliberations of that workshop.

Across the Division, funds required amount to \$8,882k (\$6,852k rate funded; \$2,030k internal and external funds). This is a rate funded increase of \$1,181k (20.8%) on our soft numbers (currently in Facing the Future) for 2000/2001.

The following outlines the changes for each department:

(a) **Environment Co-ordination Department**

Most of the programmes for the Council’s new education strategy are located in this Department. The Manager’s position and an allocation for the Environment Co-ordinator’s position (\$100k) were previously situated in the Environment Support Budget.

Total operating expenditure for this area is \$554k in 2000/2001. This is broken down into seven major activities:

- Co-ordination Support (\$211k)
- Sustainable Wellington (\$47k)
- Business Bridges (\$41k)
- Adopt a stream – Learnwell (\$12k)
- Environmental trails – Learnwell (\$164k)
- Care Groups - Community Connections (\$15k)
- Environment education promotion (\$63k)

Internal revenue shows a sum of \$50k per year throughout the ten year period. This is from the Utilities Services Group for the promotion of water-care programmes in schools.

The budget also includes a capital expenditure item for purchase of a vehicle for the education team as it is apparent that they will need to spend time out and about in the Region.

In this first year, as part of the *Learnwell* programme, we will be developing our first environmental trail. We expect this to take 18 months to complete and have programmed other trails for Years 3,5,7 and 9. It is the development of these trails which is responsible for the variation in budget across the ten year period.

We intend to develop a mobile facility to provide on-site educational resources and learning opportunities which can be moved from one trail site to another. Expenditure for this facility is programmed for 2001/2 (\$200k).

Together with the Resource Policy Department, a budget has been included to establish care groups comprising community members who will be actively involved in community care programmes. There is little additional expenditure required in this area as it has a large staff resource component and existing staff resources are being employed.

Similarly, the adopt a stream programme for school children uses existing staff resources. Additional expenditure is primarily materials (\$5k in 2000/1).

The other new area of work is helping individual businesses to act in an environmentally responsible manner. An extra staff member is required for this work. That person's time is included in the Environment Co-ordination Department's budget, but materials for the work are found with Resource Investigations as staff from the latter department will be carrying out much of the work.

Finally, a budget has been included for promoting environmental care and a sustainable region as indicated in the education strategy.

(b) Resource Policy Department

Total operating expenditure in this area is \$1,982k for 2000/2001 – up \$285k on this year.

The significant areas of expenditure over and above the soft numbers are for Iwi (\$138k) and the Department's part in implementing the RPS and the education initiative.

(c) Consents Management

Total operating expenditure for 2000/2001 is \$1,406k an increase of \$22k on the current year.

This Department's budget is little changed with the exception of reclaiming a staff position. This cost has been offset by reduced planned expenditure on advertising and commissioners' costs as we have not met budget in the past.

(d) Resource Investigations Department

Total operating expenditure for this Department for 2000/2001 is \$2,053k – an increase of 89k on this year. Other areas of the Department's work have been significantly rationalised to provide for the new programmes. In addition, some programmes, eg Moera Aquifer investigation, provided in the current year, will have been completed.

Much of the increased expenditure for this Department is for enhancing our environmental monitoring capabilities. The State of the Environment Report revealed that in we simply do not have enough knowledge in some areas to be able to gauge environmental health or our environmental management performance.

Consequently, additional expenditure has been provided for enhancing our ability to monitor air, soil and water quality (\$311k).

As recommended by Councillors at the Environment budget workshop, the air quality monitoring programme has been staged so that expenditure is better spread across the ten year period.

Increased expenditure is planned with our hazardous waste management work. An agrichemical collection throughout the Region and a household hazardous waste collection have respectively been included in the ten year plan, but phased so that the former commences in 2001/2 and the latter in 2003/4. No expenditure is planned for this coming year.

Other additional investment is in the investigation of the causes of stormwater pollution (\$50k), a science and research fund (\$20k) and the clean-up of contaminated sites on Council lands (\$25k).

As referred to in the Environment Co-ordination Department's budget, we have also included expenditure for assisting businesses to act in an environmentally responsible manner (\$50k).

The move of the state of the environment reporting function means that the cost has been transferred to the Resource Policy Department resulting in savings in Resource Investigations. One extra staff member has been provided for pollution response as the workload is so high. This staff member was employed last year as a position was seconded from the Consents Management Department. Demand in the consents area has meant that this Department now requires its full staff complement.

Capital expenditure items for 2000/2001 are air quality monitoring equipment (\$145k) and water quality equipment (\$20k).

(e) Emergency Management Department

Total operating expenditure is \$366k – and increase of \$70k on the previous year.

New expenditure is confined to establishing a new Incident Control Centre for emergency management and the Harbours Department for oil spill response.

Allowance has been made for fit-out costs (\$15k) and re-location costs (\$25k), as well as rent (\$28k). No provision has been made for an emergency generator (c \$150k) as we are not certain whether this will be required.

We have considered various locations, but this budget reflects a move from the Beehive to Level 8 of the Regional Council Centre. Costs of Emergency Management's current offices are contained in the budget for the Environment Co-ordination Department who will take over that space.

This budget remains unchanged with the exception of the accommodation. At this stage we have not included any increased expenditure for the Emergency Management Group as we are still unsure what this may be.

(f) **Harbours Department**

Total operating expenditure is \$1,043k – up \$16k on last year.

This budget remains relatively unchanged. However, as discussed at the Councillors' workshop, a sum of \$45k has been provided to enhance enforcement capability as recommended by the Pleasure Boat Advisory Committee.

To provide for the additional navigational services (eg anemometers) that CentrePort Wellington Ltd (and other commercial users) are asking us to provide, we have included capital expenditure of \$20k for the next three years. This has been offset by a reduction of equivalent sums in our repairs and maintenance budget.

4. **Divisional Priorities**

Each year the Divisional Strategy and Direction includes our priorities for the year. We have found that these provide a focus for our work beyond the outputs specified in the Operating Plans. The following have been developed for 2000/2001:

- Refocus on the quality of our work
- Focus on our environment education work.
- Find more innovative and fun ways to work with the community in all aspects of our work.
- Improve our environmental monitoring and work with local authorities towards the integration of monitoring programmes
- Establish a better incident control centre, particularly for harbour management.
- Help get a successful Emergency Management Group working for the Region
- Improve our compliance capabilities

5. Recommendation

- (1) *That this report be received and its contents noted.*
- (2) *That the following Operating Plans be approved in principle:*

*Environment Co-ordination Department
Resource Policy Department
Consents Management Department
Resource Investigations Department
Emergency Management Department
Harbours Department*

- (3) *That the proposed Operating Plans for the above activities be recommended to the Policy and Finance Committee for inclusion in the Council's proposed Long Term Financial Strategy 2000-2010 (incorporating Council's 2000/2001 Annual Plan).*

Report prepared by:

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