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Report to Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee
Cr Ian Buchanan, Chairperson, Hearings Committee for Proposed Regional Plan Changes

Decisions on Proposed Changes to Regional Plans

1. Purpose

To approve proposed changes to five of the Wellington Regional Council's regional plans.

2. Background

Proposed Changes to five of our regional plans were notified in February 2002. The primary reasons for proposing the plan changes were to withdraw the Transitional Regional Plan and to change rules regarding access to groundwater on the Kapiti Coast.

The changes also provided an opportunity to make changes of a more minor nature to improve the plans. These minor changes fall into the following categories:

- new permitted activity rules for activities that presently require resource consents although the activities have less than minor adverse effects;
- changes to permitted activity rules that arise as a result of working with the plans;
- changes that include or update information; and
- minor corrections and clarification that does not change the intent of provisions.

3. Submissions, Hearings, and Recommended Decisions

Submissions were received from 21 submitters on the five proposed plan changes. Of these, only one submission was received on the Transitional Regional Plan, which supported withdrawal of this plan. Five people submitted on the changes to groundwater access rules on the Kapiti Coast. Three were in support. The remaining

two submitters expressed support for the changes but raised a number of issues for consideration by the Council. These two submitters did not attend the hearings. The remaining submissions on the plan changes were on the changes of a more minor nature.

Hearings on the plan changes were held on the afternoon of 19 November 2002. The Hearings Committee was made up of myself, and Crs Terry McDavitt and Chris Turver. Nine submitters attended the hearings.

The Hearings Committee is now recommending withdrawal of the Transitional Regional Plan and the changes to groundwater access rules on the Kapiti Coast as notified. Recommendations are also made on all the additional changes to the plans that are of a more minor nature. The recommendations are available for inspection in the Councillors' lounge or they can be obtained from Murray McLea in the Resource Policy Department. They will be tabled at the meeting.

The Council is now able to approve the recommended decisions on the proposed plan changes.

4. **What Happens next?**

Once approved, the decisions of the Council will be publicly notified. An appeal period of 15 days is available to submitters for references to the Environment Court. Staff will notify the decisions in late January to avoid the Christmas period. If there are appeals, staff will report back to the Council once they are resolved, so that the plan changes can be made operative. If there are no appeals, the Council can approve the plan changes at its next meeting and publicly notify an operative date for them to take effect.

5. **Communications**

Prior to public notification, the Council carried out extensive consultation on the plan changes. Following public notification, the statutory process for submissions and hearings, and the opportunity for appeals provides the opportunity for further consultation and improvements.

The Regional Plan User Guide will be updated so that it is consistent with the plan changes.

6. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Council approve the recommended decisions of the Hearings Committee for:

- Proposed Plan Change 2 to the Transitional Regional Plan
- Proposed Plan Change 1 the Regional Freshwater Plan
- Proposed Plan Change 1 the Regional Plan for Discharges to Land
- Proposed Plan Change 1 the Regional Air Quality Plan
- Proposed Plan Change 1 the Regional Soil Plan.

CR IAN BUCHANAN

Chairperson,

Hearings Committee for Proposed Regional Plan Changes