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Committee Policy, Finance and Strategy
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Provision of standby power to the Regional Council Centre

1. Purpose

To seek Council's approval to negotiate a variation in the lease agreement for the Regional Council Centre (RCC) to provide a standby generator to enable Council services to continue to be provided during emergencies involving power outages.

2. Significance of decision

The matters in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

A number of recent circumstances have combined to cause officers to assess Greater Wellington's facilities in terms of our readiness to deal with emergencies and exceptional circumstances.

February 2004 floods

Following the storms and flooding that occurred during February 2004 an internal review was carried out to assess how well we responded. One of the key lessons that came out of this review was that the public make many more calls upon us than they used to.

As a result of this review we have installed additional phones in the committee room so that we can create an ad-hoc call-centre to respond to enquiries during an abnormal event.

We have also improved the configuration of our vehicle radio sets so that all staff can find all other vehicles regardless of which department they work in.

One weakness identified from this review is that the RCC is reliant on having mains electrical power as we only have a small generator to service the flood warning computer system.

Business Continuity Response Plan

In October 2004 a review of the Council's Business Continuity Response Plan was completed. The Plan identifies a number of essential and high priority services on the basis that they:

- Will assist in the immediate response and/or community recovery
- Are required to protect the health and safety of the community
- Are necessary for the recovery phase of an emergency event
- Will result in significant financial impacts if not restored
- Will meet the public expectations of the Council.

While many of these services such as water supply are delivered outside of the RCC there is an increasing reliance on support systems based there.

The Business Continuity Response Plan envisages that the RCC will remain the main operational centre for the council in all emergencies except where extreme circumstances render the building uninhabitable. In that case operations will be diverted to the Masterton office. Consideration has been given to moving essential and high priority operations to Masterton in lesser emergencies but the cost of replicating sufficient resources to maintain these services in a timely manner would be prohibitive.

Divisions are now working to make sure that all of the necessary support facilities are in place to ensure the smooth running of the Business Continuity Response Plan.

Currently the standby generator in the RCC is sized appropriately to provide power to the flood warning system and can not be extended to cover all of the necessary functions.

Civil defence emergency management

Until recently Greater Wellington's civil defence emergency management emergency operations centre (EOC) was located in the basement of the Beehive. With the development of the National Crisis Management Centre the Council was required to vacate the Beehive and has located the EOC in the Regional Council Centre.

For a period of time it was unclear whether Greater Wellington would retain an operational role in an emergency. It is now clear that this will be the case and the recently adopted Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan notes that the Group EOC is located at Level 4, RCC.

The Group Plan lists required standards for EOCs, which include sufficient alternative power to run full emergency operations. Such operations could extend over several days if not weeks.

To be confident of operating effectively during a power cut the EOC needs to have standby power available. The RCC will then be a suitable location for the EOC for all but a major earthquake event.

To cover the situation following a major event that renders the RCC uninhabitable we are looking for an alternative EOC, possibly in the Wairarapa or at an existing territorial authority EOC. Such a facility will also require standby power.

Existing standby power arrangements

Regional Council Centre

A small generator provides power to the flood warning computer and radio on level 3. It also provides power to the security system

Masterton Office

A medium sized generator has become surplus to requirements in the water supply area and officers have made arrangements for it to be placed in the Masterton Office as part of the current upgrade. The generator is insufficient to power the RCC but will provide sufficient power for the Masterton Office. It will replace an existing generator that provides power for only some of the Masterton Office operations.

Other councils

Wellington City Council has standby power for its main office plus standby power for its EOC and alternative EOC.

Porirua City Council has standby power for its EOC and also for its alternative EOC.

Hutt City Council has standby power for its EOC that will also support the essential services in its main office.

Upper Hutt City Council has plans to purchase a generator for its main office. Currently it has standby power for its EOC and also for its alternative EOC.

Masterton District Council has standby power for its EOC and some other strategic parts of its main office. The alternative EOC is Greater Wellington's Masterton Office which has backup power.

Kapiti Coast District Council has standby power for its main office, which includes its EOC, plus standby power for its alternative EOC.

Carterton District Council has provision for some standby power for its EOC to enable basic operations.

South Wairarapa District Council is currently reviewing the adequacy of its standby power for its EOC.

4. Statutory obligation

Greater Wellington has a statutory duty to ensure that it is able to function to the fullest possible extent, even though this may be at a reduced level, during and after an emergency (section 64 Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002).

5. Comment

Taken together the factors discussed above indicate that it is essential that Greater Wellington has standby power available in the Regional Council Centre.

Officers have investigated the option of providing a smaller generator wired to only those parts of the building essential to emergency operations as an alternative to providing a larger generator capable of meeting the average building load. However, the complexity in wiring sections of each floor was found to be such that the costs of the two options were similar.

Bringing in a generator when required is not considered a viable option as there are few suitable generators available and they are often in use on construction and film sites. It would not be possible to guarantee that a generator will be available when required, to a large extent negating the identified need.

Cost summary

Supply and install 350KVA generator in basement	\$ 200,200
Annual operating	\$ 18,000

Variation to lease

The generator will obviously have a useful life of at least 20 years and will be available to supply power to all current and future tenants of the building.

Officers will therefore expect that the cost of this investment will be reflected in rental costs spread over this period.

Overall officers feel that the costs are well justified to ensure that Greater Wellington meets statutory obligations and the expectations of the public.

6. Communications

No communications are required.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee recommend that Council:

Ask the Council Secretary to negotiate a variation to the current lease for the Regional Council Centre so that provision of standby power is included.

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