



Report 07.108
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Committee Council
Author Ian Buchanan Chairman

Chairman's Report

After a relaxing holiday break it is good to see all councillors back into business, with a full round of committee meetings already completed. Election years are always a little different and I am sure 2007 will not break that mould. February has certainly been a busy month. Apart from the usual business of Council, I have spent considerable time in two areas.

1. Wellington Regional Strategy

Councillors are fully aware of all of the detail that led to Greater Wellington's decision to accept the governance and funding requests from the WRS Committee. A great deal of work went into finalising the Strategy following the late 2006 hearings, and lining everything up for Greater Wellington to consider. We now need to work through the objections raised by Upper Hutt City Council before finalising the LTCCP change and Annual Plan in June. In the meantime, work will continue to establish the new EDA, but no decisions will be made that cannot be reversed, depending on the outcome of the mediation. I will pass on the chairmanship of the WRS Committee to one of the independent members at the first meeting.

2. LGNZ/Regional Affairs Committee

I continue to be closely involved in the development of local government positions on the National Water Programme of Action and Flood Risk Groups. Councillors have received the latest update on both work streams during February. A position paper on flood risk management has now been finalised and is with central government agencies and relevant Ministers. We will now go into a round of discussion and policy development that should lead to Cabinet consideration around the end of June. This is expected to include principles for a National Policy Statement on flood risk management and new policy settings around delivery of the national interest components, including possible mechanisms for funding.

The Water Programme is proceeding along similar lines, with the same time-frame as is work by MAF on sustainable land management and climate change. Considerable effort is going into getting all this work into a long-term

sustainable land management framework but real integration is probably some way off.

Greater Wellington was a major sponsor of the recent PCE20 Forum on sustainability, attended by Crs Turver, McDavitt and myself. The Forum reinforced the direction we are promoting for integrated land management. My thanks to Chris and Terry for giving up their Saturday to escort the international visitors to the Forum on a field trip that included land and river management, water supply and transport issues. I understand it was a very successful tour. Unfortunately, I had another commitment and could not join the group.

3. Other matters

Bus services

Councillors are aware of the disruption to services during February and the underlying reasons. Crs McDavitt, Evans and myself met with the Infratil Board to express our concerns and the various actions to deal with the matter have been communicated.

Rail Infrastructure

The transport team, including senior staff, met with senior officials from ONTRACK to discuss the way forward for maintenance, renewals and upgrades to the metro rail network. This was a very open and productive exchange that will clear the way for project identification and prioritisation, identification of funding availability and shortfalls and providing an agreed timetable and mechanism for getting the work done. Officials will now pull all this together for Council consideration over the next few months. What we don't need is any more studies....! We collectively know what has to be done and we know the priorities and timeframes set by the arrival of the new EMUs in 2010. We need to sort out the funding and then we need to get on with it.

Trolley buses

Still no contract!

Rates review

The government rates inquiry is now in full swing with the team led by David Shand having their first round of public contact during March. Local government representatives from the region met with the group on 5 March for initial discussions. Nothing new here and it is a little difficult to get very excited about possible outcomes. We will hold a workshop for councillors on this issue prior to preparation of a Greater Wellington submission, due by 30 April.

Meetings, other than Greater Wellington Committees

Morgan Williams, PCE – Forum and field tour arrangements

Rob Fenwick – Living Earth
Mayors Ogden and Guppy – WRS
Chris McKenzie (Minister of Finance office)
ONTRACK
Tim Pankhurst
Regional Leaders’ meeting
RAC meeting and tour – Whangarei
MAF – sustainable land use policy
Minister for the Environment - Waiwhetu

4. Recommendations

That the Council:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

Report prepared by:

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Chairman