

Environmental Reference Group Meeting Minutes 21 February 2011 Committee Room 2, Wellington City Council

Present:

Sea Rotmann (Co-chair)
Peter Gilbert
Marc Slade
Phil Hancock
Sarah Free
Claire Graeme
Mike Ennis
Bev Abbott
Kathryn Maxwell
Claire Graeme
Tushara Kodikara
Councillor Ritchie

Apologies

Hamish Allardice (Co-chair)
Philip Mladenov
Councillor Lester

WCC Officers:

Zach Rissel (Senior Policy Advisor)
Mike Mendonca (Manager, CitiOperations)
Mike Oates (Manager, Open Space and Rec
Planning)

Agenda

1. Regional Waste Minimisation and Management Plan
2. Capital Spaces Plan Review
3. Other business

Regional Waste Minimisation and Management Plan

Mike Mendonca discussed the key components of the draft Regional Waste Minimisation and Management Plan, including:

- eight local authorities in the region have contributed to the plan and it will be going to each council for final endorsement
- education will be a key component of the Plan
- each local authority has their own “sub-plans” that guide programmes, projects or policies that are specific to that authority
- organic waste (mainly sewage sludge) is the most problematic waste stream for the region and the highest priority for identifying alternative options for treatment, recovery or recycling.

The key feedback points from the group included:

Ability of Council to influence reduction

- Several questions focused on the Council’s ability to influence the supply or product chain in order to reduce the amount of waste being produced.
- Discussion from Mike, Tushara and Zach that there is very little the Council can do to regulate the supply chain but education can play a role in influencing consumer choice.

- Central Government needed to take leadership role with reduction by developing product stewardship schemes or regulations relating to packaging.
- Focus also needs to be on responsibility of producer, importer and consumer to reduce waste as opposed to just local government.
- A suggestion by Clare that maybe adopting a policy of smaller bins may discourage consumption.

New recycling system

- Mike provided a brief overview of how the new recycling system will work with glass being collected one week and all other recycling materials being collected on alternative weeks.
- The new wheelie bin system follows international best practice and will improve safety conditions for the recyclers.
- Bags will be issued to households that are not suitable for a wheelie bin.

Organics

- Mike discussed the option of looking at organic, wheelie-bin collection at a future date.
- Currently there is still a large-scale composting operation using green waste and small amounts of food waste but the issues is finding markets for the compost.
- The Council experienced a difficulty finding a market for compost with Living Earth, who were producing sewage-based compost.
- Phil commented that the lack of demand for the compost was most likely do to the fact that sewage was mixed into the compost.
- Marc asked how Council would encourage more home-based composting and Clare advocated working with community groups.

Business

- There was discussion on how to engage business and how to incentivise business to take action to reduce waste and to recycle.
- Mike discussed that the Council was not funded to manage waste from businesses and that the focus for business will be education.
- There is a lot of business recycling (including cardboard collection from the CBD) but this is managed business to business.
- Phil mentioned that planning rules could be adjusted to ensure new office buildings/upgrades or commercial developments have adequate space for recycling services.
- Kathryn mentioned that we could be more creative with supporting small to medium sized businesses because they are under-resourced.
- Discussion that Council could do more to work with supermarkets to organize collection points for certain waste items.

Summary points

- General positive support from ERG for the Plan – good step to get 8 councils together.
- Education component will be important for businesses and home-composting. Council will work with 7 other councils to develop more coordinated education plan.
- Council is restricted on its regulatory powers relating to package and what it can require households/businesses to do.
- Organic waste (especially sewage) is a key priority for 8 councils in the region.

Capital Spaces Plan review

Mike Oates gave a presentation on the Capital Spaces review (see attached for content).

The key feedback points from the group included:

Role of open space for active transport

- Consider open space can play a role in assisting active mode usage. Bike paths could potentially provide popular commuting links on open space.

Definition

- What is the definition of open space? Does it include private land and road reserve? Advantages in looking at the wider role.

Accessibility

- There are physical challenges of getting access to open space for some. With an ageing population, ensure they have access to good open space experiences.
- Lack of flat land means accessibility a challenge.
- Lack of sense of community and rise of individualism leading to less involvement in clubs and team sports.

Policy framework

- Look at how the policy fits within the policy framework. Does it need to be reviewed or could it be replaced?
- Need clearer linkages of how the LTP maps to strategies and plans such as theses and individual budgets.
- Ensure there is regular monitoring on progress and that the plan integrates and aligns with the strategy framework.
- Look at the Measure Up document that informed the Wellington Regional Policy statement to understand our baseline indicators.

Resource constraints and role of open space

- Resource constraints (such oil supply issues) will change behaviour and where/how people go to recreate.
- Resource constraints creates demands for different uses of open space.
- Mike advised to review the November 2010 ERG report back to SPC paper with its list of macro and global issues for consideration in the Capital Spaces.

Relationship with Tangata Whenua

- Relationship with Port Nicholson Trust will be very important for the city and planning with respect to Open Space.

General Business

- Zach answered Bev's query that the ERG can submit as a group on non-Council policies but that the focus of the ERG will be on Council policy programme.
- Bev wanted to know if Council submitted on Greater Wellington's "State of the Environment" report

- Sea Rottman announced that she was standing as a Green Party candidate in the upcoming election and wanted to know if that created any conflicts with the ERG. Zach would follow-up on the issue and get back to Sea.
- Kathryn Maxwell announced that she was moving to Australia and this was her last ERG meeting. The group thanked her for her efforts and wished her well.