

Environmental Reference Group Minutes

Monday, 8 June 2015, 5:30-7:30 pm

Wellington City Council, 101 Wakefield St, Committee Room 2

Janet Young in the Chair

Present

Members: Phil Hancock, Sophie Mormede, Stu Farrant, Yvonne Legarth, Janet Young, Mark Fenwick, Martin Payne

Councillors: Cr Pannett

Officers: Simon Wright and Moana Mackey (Policy & Reporting), Tom Petit (Research)

Guests: Paul Young (Generation Zero)

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cr Ritchie, Kate Mitcalfe and Paula Warren for being unable to attend, and from Cr Pannett for arriving late.

1. Introduction and conflicts of Interest

Janet welcomed everyone

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above. Further apologies from Howard Markland and Graeme Sawyer were received after the meeting.

3. Climate Change Action Plan

Moana and Tom provided some background to the upcoming review of the CCAP, discussed some of their objectives (e.g. clear actions with measurable impacts to track progress) and areas of focus. A more robust reporting process will be developed for the new CCAP. The review is planned to be completed by November so that funding bids can be made through the next Annual Plan process.

The WCC intends to work with the Sustainable Business Council as business emissions are high.

Some solar power initiatives will be considered to provide more certainty and overcome investment barriers (e.g. lines companies cannot invest in equipment they do not own, Auckland Council have changed consent rules to make solar installations easier).

There was a discussion about how best to quantify emissions. Should indirect emissions and embodied energy be counted (e.g. waste made outside the district that is disposed of in the district and energy in pumped water).

A question was raised about the extent to which the CCAP should focus on controlling waste as this is something the WCC does have relatively high levels of control over. To do this, the WCC needs to address the sewerage sludge issue. Current policy settings provide an incentive for the Council to landfill sludge.

The WCC has a relationship with MOTU, which is working on a stakeholder engagement programme to create broad ownership and collaborative action. It was suggested that the WCC should scan city initiatives that the UN is showcasing for ideas about engagement and ideas for the CCAP.

The importance of the WCC's advocacy role with the Government and other councils was discussed, as was the importance of local government leading work on adaptation. An immediate focus for the new Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) will be developing measures to deal with the increasing intensity of storms. The increased use of ferries for public transport should also be considered given the risks posed by major earthquakes to the city's current transport infrastructure.

The ERG would like to be involved in the redevelopment of the CCAP in a similar way as it was for the Council's 'Our Natural Capital' work, for which officers had multiple sessions with the ERG throughout the process.

Paul Young described the climate-focused youth network called Generation Zero and its work at local and national levels.

4. Initial discussion about the ERG work programme

Members reviewed the draft Policy Forward Programme and identified the following topics as ones they would like to be involved with:

- Major transport initiatives
- Resilience and climate change
- Environment including the management of the 3 waters
- Urban and recreational developments
- Resource Management Act reform
- Trade Waste Bylaw
- Waste Plan

The thematic areas developed for the ERG's Long Term Plan submission are still relevant.

Part of the role of the CRO will be to 'join the dots' across multiple policies and teams. For example, the CRO should promote consideration of the 'greening' of the city's walls and roofs, ensure that water sensitive urban design is implemented (and that it may be more important than a Green Star rating for a building such as the new Johnsonville Library), and make the opening of the next stage of the landfill an opportunity for public discussion about resilience and sustainability.

5. Minutes of last meeting

Phil moved that the minutes be accepted as true and correct. Stu seconded the motion and it was passed.

6. Matters arising

Submissions on LTP, Urban Growth Plan & Infrastructure Strategy

Making a submission reminded Councillors and officers about the ERG. It also helped the ERG develop positions on a range of issues. However, making a submission at the end of a decision process has little influence and did not generate much discussion. One positive impact was on the funding allocated to hydraulic modelling for the city. It was suggested that the ERG should invite Councillors to its meetings more often.

Approved 'Our Natural Capital'

This item was not discussed.

7. Other Business

Lower Cuba Street

Member expressed concern that the difficulties the Council has had with the Lower Cuba Street rain gardens may affect the Council's willingness to use similar approaches in the future. The ERG should invite the Urban Design team to a meeting to discuss and learn from what happened.

Focus for next meeting

It was agreed that the 'rotating chair' system would be reviewed at the next ERG meeting to ensure longer term planning. Members should be in leadership positions for at least 3 to 6 months. Cr Pannett would like to be involved in setting the ERG's meeting agendas.

Action Summary

1. Liaison officer to invite the Urban Design team to discuss Lower Cuba Street
2. Review the 'rotating chair' system at the July ERG meeting.