

WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST

SUBMISSION ON REPORT 2 TO THE STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY FOR THE WATERFRONT

The Wellington Civic Trust agrees with the recommendation of officers that the reduced status quo option is the best immediate choice for the continued operation of the Council's waterfront implementation agency. We believe, however, that this should be an interim decision and that the governance structure of the project should be included in the proposed review of the Framework.

While the Trust agrees with the broad conclusion reached in the review, it is disappointed with its tone. We can well understand why the company was prompted to write so fulsomely in praise of Karen Wallace's work. The report exaggerates the risks of the in-house option and is too enthusiastic in its support of the CCO model. We believe each model has its strengths and its weaknesses.

The case for winding up the company is not on the grounds that it is inefficient or unaccountable. The relevant arguments now are the ones which in December 2008 persuaded the Council to move the implementation role in-house – reduced work load and the opportunity to cut operating costs. At that time the Civic Trust supported the Council's decision.

The strength of the CCO structure is that it can recruit directors and staff with skills specifically appropriate for the tasks involved. But first we need to know what are those tasks. In 2001 the Leadership Group identified them and a board and staff were recruited fit for purpose.

The Council was advised on 15 December that current issues with the waterfront included planning and regulatory matters, public access to ground floors, new buildings, finance, and connections with the city and that these issues justified a review of the Framework. That is a comprehensive list opening up the possibility of a total rewrite.

The Trust is bemused by that decision. We had not been aware that there was widespread dissatisfaction with this document. The arguments we inevitably have on waterfront issues are not about the Framework principles, but about their interpretation. I do hope councillors realise what they are letting themselves in for by opening up for further debate the basic issues and principles of the waterfront development.

No-one can predict the outcome. How strange then to determine the governance structure in advance of the values and principles which will determine the nature of the project.

The two are inextricably linked, as indeed the Wallace report comments at section 5.8.

We can understand why the staff want a settled work environment – wouldn't we all. Unfortunately that is not a realistic option because it is not matched by a settled demand for the company's services. The reduced status quo is a sensible, moderate response for the immediate future, which should be revisited as part of the Framework review.

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