

Environmental Reference Group Meeting Minutes 21 June 2010 Committee Room 1, Wellington City Council

Present:

Hamish Allardice (Co-chair)
Sea Rotmann (Co-chair)
Peter Gilbert
Marc Slade
Phil Hancock
Sarah Free
Tushara Kodikara
Philip Mladenov
Claire Graeme
Mike Ennis
Bev Abbott
Councillor Wade-Brown

Apologies

Nigel Smith (Youth Council) -
resigned
Kathryn Maxwell
Mel Cutler – resigned
Nick Potter – resigned
Councillor Iona Pannett

WCC Officers:

Zach Rissel (Policy)
Aroha Rangi (Policy)
Bryan Smith (Policy)

Agenda

1. Terms of Reference Review
2. Water Conservation Plan
3. Recycling update
4. Engaging households and businesses on reducing emissions and adaptation issues (session 1)

Terms of Reference Review – Aroha Rangi

Aroha Rangi summarized the previous feedback from the ERG on the Terms of Reference from the March meeting.

Provided an update of the recommendations that the Council has agreed on, which is to review all reference groups in November when the new Council agrees its committee structure and priorities under the 2010/2013 Governance Framework.

Bev asked if some of the November items could be brought forward and if the review could occur later. The terms of reference review for all reference groups will be timed with the review of the Council's Governance Framework so it is unlikely the review will be moved.

Phil questioned whether the name of the reference group should be more specific (e.g. waste, water and transport).

Water Conservation Plan

Bryan Smith gave a presentation on the Strategy and Policy Committee's decisions from October 2009 and from June 2010 on the regional water supply, demand and storage issues.

Summary of questions and feedback:

- Bev Abbott – assumption that that we have to have less water to accommodate more population growth.
- Phil Hancock – advocated for stricter standards for new development such as grey water systems and rain-water tanks as opposed to spreading costs over existing properties. Councillor Wade-Brown identified how development contributions finance new infrastructure development. Incentives could be provided for people taking action and identified the Home Rating System as a tool that might be useful for the Council. Bryan Smith discussed how providing incentives and requiring higher standards for new builds could be done but the capital costs are still high. Focus on what the cost effective
- Bryan Smith discussed how grey-water systems were relatively expensive and that this option might be more costly compared to others.
- Claire Graeme – Identified that people would fix leaks if they were charged for it. Outlined how hard it is to change behaviour without costs. Wanted better analysis on the ecological effects on the Hutt River from reducing water flows.
- Sea Rotmann – Asked about better leak detection measures. Councillor Wade-Brown discussed the existing leak detection programme and how 15% of network water is lost in leaks (relatively low for international standards). Discussed how education works most in a crisis or with pro-active incentives.
- Hamish Allardice – Asked if building a dam the answer. Bryan Smith identified that the dam is likely inevitable but that water conservation measures could delay the dam for decades.
- Mike Ennis – Try to involve trade associations like master plumbers more in advocating for more efficient shower heads and cisterns. Asked what the results (in litres saved per day) would be of different interventions (e.g. low flow shower heads and dual flush cisterns). What are the key barriers to change in households?
- Sea Rotmann – Measures targeting households – shower heads – need to be carefully managed to avoid the nanny state issue. Phil Hancock said that incentives and education can eliminate this issue instead of regulations. Councillor Wade-Brown said we are trialing different shower heads in public buildings.
- Someone asked how much of water is for potable uses (drinking, washing and cooking) and Bryan Smith identified that 5% of water is used for these purposes. Phil Hancock identified that most water went to toilets, clothes/dish washing and gardening.
- Peter Gilberd – Discussed how to build up soil moisture in gardens in spring. When you bring in pricing, this can cause problems between rich and poor.
- Sarah Free – How much is domestic use and how much is commercial. Bryan answered about 50/50 split.
- Bev Abbott – Suggested targeting properties with high numbers of people. Avoid water restrictions because it impacts on peoples quality of life. More interested in personal allocation rather than giving up water use. Discussion document is disparaging on water tanks but there is a lot of summer rain.
- Bryan Smith's recap

- Targeting measures at properties with high numbers of people (e.g. large families) should be considered.
- New builds should be considered differently than existing builds. What would this mean for a new build? How much would need to be required?
- Lobby Department of Building and Housing for dual flush toilet requirements
- Work with trade groups

Recycling changes

Bryan Smith briefed the ERG on the changes to the recycling system:

- Weekly collection that alternates between glass only one week and all other containers (plastics, aluminium, steel) the next week
- 85% of recycling materials will be processed in NZ
- Looking to work with Porirua on waste management
- Pilot will be initiated in October.

Engagement with households on energy and transport issues

The ERG provided some advice on how to engage households on energy efficiency issues. The advice will be used to inform the development of the Council's Home Energy Saver Programme. The summary of feedback is contained below:

Easy wins – focus on the small, low-hanging fruit in households and office buildings

Youth – need programmes that target the youth and the next generation. Focus on schools and create environmental ambassadors.

Tools – provide tools to give people understanding of their footprint. This could include online tools to help with calculations or social media.

Barriers – need to understand barriers to change and there are risks of putting information out to the public if barriers are not properly identified.

Voices – use community groups, church groups, business groups and trade associations (plumbers) to reinforce key messages. Trade groups also need better training to give better quality advice.

Simple tools – people are not motivated by carbon dioxide savings, they are motivated by financial savings. People ignore written material but act through video or face-to-face advice, home energy auditors. Look to develop joint ventures with energy companies, they know consumer patterns and they see value in energy efficiency projects because it helps to keep customers.

Advocacy – Council should advocate for tighter regulations.

Energy companies – work with energy companies to give rewards points or prizes to customers (easy wins: lighting, shower heads, pipe lagging, towel rails timers).

Cooperation – it could be hard to get energy retailer cooperation.

Smart metres – these things are coming and will drive behavior change.

Peak electricity – reduce demand at peak times because this will reduce marginal coal/gas generation (e.g. dishwashers at night).

Social aspect – target needy groups; financial and education barriers; high number of people per household.