
REPORT 1
(1215/52/IM)

DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2011/12: HEARING OF ORAL SUBMISSIONS

1. Purpose of Report

This report presents a summary of the oral submissions on the 2011/12 Draft Annual Plan.

2. Recommendations

Officers recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the minutes of the Strategy and Policy Committee meeting of 17, 18 and 24 May 2011 (attached as appendix one).*

3. Background

The Council is required to use the special consultative procedure as part of adopting the annual plan. The procedure includes offering submitters the opportunity to speak in support of their submission. 81 submitters presented their submissions to the committee over three days.

This report provides a brief overview of the main issues that were presented and the minutes of the meeting.

Hearing Format

The hearing format maintained a relatively informal approach for submitters and provided opportunities for elected members to engage with submitters and to ask follow-up questions.

Summary of themes

The hearings were an open forum and submitters were free to comment on any matter broadly associated with the draft annual plan. While the majority of submitters had a primary focus, many submitters took the opportunity to express

their views about the suite of proposed savings options and initiatives that were highlighted in the consultation material.

In general, the issues raised at the hearings were indicative of the overall tenor of the written submissions. In addition to views about the proposed savings options and initiatives, car parking fees, responses to climate change, water fluoridation, and community resilience were common themes.

The full set of written submissions has been distributed to elected members and made publicly available. A summary of the main themes from the written submissions is provided in a separate report on this agenda.

4. Discussion

The following section summarises some of the key and recurring themes that were raised at the hearings.

4.1 Consultation Items

Deep water pool complex feasibility study

This item attracted the most comments from submitters during the hearing. While a majority of submitters opposed the feasibility study, there were also a good number of submitters in favour, particularly those that would directly or indirectly benefit from a deep water pool complex (ie users, swim codes).

Submitters opposed to the proposal thought it was a nice to have in the current economic climate, were concerned about the cost and/or the scope of the feasibility study, and were concerned there would be an over-concentration of recreational facilities in the eastern suburbs, which may also be susceptible to a range of risks (eg. future sea level rise, tsunami etc).

A number of submitters commented on the scale of the feasibility study cost relative to the proposed savings options. Other submitters suggested that peak demand could be temporarily alleviated by modifying pool opening hours until the economic climate improved.

Submitters supporting the proposal saw the construction of a deep water pool complex as an essential step in addressing a shortage in pool space in the city. Many of the submitters saw the feasibility as a means of Wellington retaining and attracting high performing athletes and strengthening the city's reputation for sport and physical activity. Submitters in support of the proposal largely acknowledged that there would be an increase in overall user charges for pools should the proposal go ahead.

Library savings

A number of submitters commented on the savings proposals for library services, particularly closing the Central Library at 7pm on weekdays. Most submitters opposed the proposed closure because of its potential impact on workers and students, the library's value as a public space in the evenings, and the detrimental impact the proposed closure would have on the vitality of the central city.

There were also a number of comments suggesting the amount that would be saved was minor compared to the impact the proposal would have on the level of service at the library.

When asked, most submitters were amenable to other possibilities, like opening the Central Library later in the morning or limiting the number of late nights, but their preferred position was to leave opening hours just as they are.

Car parking: proposed fees increase and extension of hours

Apart from public transport advocates, submitters were generally opposed to the proposed changes in car parking. The proposed extension of parking hours was a particular concern for submitters, who noted the change would have a significant impact on the hospitality industry and viability of the central city as an entertainment destination.

Submitters also noted that evening parking involved a longer stay than daytime parking so a two hour limit would be problematic for people who are in the middle of an event and that if the rationale for extending parking hours was to encourage people to use public transport, then there needed to be a significant improvement in evening services.

Submitters were a little more sympathetic to the proposed increase in the hourly parking fee but the majority thought that it wasn't the right time to increase fees given the current economic climate. Some submitters raised the possibility that fee increases would see people choose other regional retail centres with free parking.

The response was mixed when asked where the Council should find the revenue to meet the shortfall should parking fees and hours remain the same. Some favoured increasing the downtown levy, others absorbed in general rates, and others through further efficiencies.

Water fluoridation

There were a several submissions concerned about the fluoridation of drinking water. These concerns included dental fluorosis, mass consumption as distinct from the benefits of directly applying fluoride to the teeth, and the absence of informed consent.

The Committee received a submission from Regional Public Health and their dental experts that outlined the case for fluoridation, which highlighted that there were quantifiable health benefits, especially in areas of high deprivation.

Community resilience

Community resilience was a theme that emerged during the hearing. Submitters identified the importance of community resilience in preparedness for natural disasters and planning for climate change and sea level rise. It emerged in specific funding requests for positions to support community endeavours such as community gardens, fair trade city, and small and medium sized enterprises. It also featured in submissions about village planning and the provision and management of community facilities.

Climate change

The Council received praise for adopting the Climate Change Action Plan last year. Submitters did however identify that climate change should be the lens through which the Council plans for all of its activities with water sensitive design, an ecological sustainability, and planning for sea level rise being recommended as potential approaches. There were also suggestions about embedding thinking about climate change by setting meaningful performance targets across the breadth of Council's activities.

Consultation

The consultation process, associated documents, and decision-making were raised intermittently during the hearings. Submitters were generally appreciative of the opportunity to participate. There were suggestions about formatting to ensure the publications were accessible (in print and online) and reduced paper use.

Funding requests

Requests for funding, or for Council to undertake specific pieces of work were made by a number of submitters. These requests, and officers' recommendations to them, are detailed in the *Key Issues and Funding Requests* report on this agenda.

A summary of all oral submissions is provided in the attached minutes.

5. Conclusion

The Strategy and Policy Committee met over three days to receive submissions on draft version of the Annual Plan 2011/12. In keeping with its terms of reference a report consisting of a summary overview and minutes of these hearings is presented for consideration and record.

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APPENDIX 1