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## **SUBMISSION ON GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL TEN-YEAR PLAN**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report proposes that Wellington City Council make a submission on the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Ten-Year Plan.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Endorse the attached submission to be forwarded to the Greater Wellington Regional Council.*
- 3. Delegate to the Mayor and Chief Executive the authority to approve minor drafting changes.*

### **3. Background**

The Local Government Act 2002 requires each local government to prepare a Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP), covering a 10 year period. The Greater Wellington Regional Council is seeking feedback on their draft ten-year plan, with the deadline for submissions being 4 May 2006. In preparing the ten-year plan, GWRC have undertaken a consultation exercise to identify community outcomes.

There is an opportunity for Wellington City Council to influence the scope of the LTCCP to ensure that the range of activities proposed support the implementation of the Wellington Regional Strategy and address a range of operational issues relating to key infrastructure.

The GWRC is a key partner with Wellington City Council and the other territorial authorities in the development of the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS). A draft WRS is due to be released for public consultation in mid-2006. Joint work is currently underway on a number of workstreams including: Effective leadership and partnerships; Quality regional form and systems; Unlocking economic potential; and Internationalisation.

### **4. Discussion**

The GWRC Ten-Year Plan covers the period 2006-16 and is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2002. Submissions on the plan close on 4 May.

The attached WCC submission outlines a range of strategic and operational issues that closely reflect and support the action areas outlined in the Council's own draft LTCCP. The key strategic issue is that the ten-year plan does not take the opportunities presented by the revised statutory roles and functions of regional councils and avoids taking a pro-active leadership role on the management of spatial land use and economic development issues which is required to implement the Wellington Regional Strategy. Operational issues included in the submission relate to the funding of infrastructure development and standards.

Whilst the draft WRS has not yet been published, the good progress made so far clearly indicates that there will be an important role for the Regional Council in its implementation. By its very nature the issues that have been raised in that process all have regional dimensions and the Regional Council holds many of the key tools that will be required to give effect to the draft strategy. The Regional Policy Statement is one of the most important of these, given its function in the resource management process, and the weight accorded to it in consent decisions and in the preparation of statutory planning documents. The current RPS gives very little consideration to regional spatial land use and economic development issues, and there is a danger that without a clear statement in the GWRC ten-year plan that this will be a new area of work in its forthcoming review, the opportunity for significant change in the short-term will be lost. Whilst there are opportunities for review at a later date, the direction taken by this ten-year plan will be influential in deciding future action and investment.

One of the possible consequences of the approach taken by the GWRC in the draft ten-year plan is that the Wellington City Council will be increasingly drawn into the difficult position of having to take a regional leadership role on spatial land use and economic development issues.

The GWRC is a key partner for the Council, and should be encouraged to think more pro-actively about a leadership role in spatial land use and economic development issues. This would be of considerable benefit to both the region and to the future prospects of Wellington City itself. Evidence from other OECD countries is that effective and coordinated governance at a city-regional level is a critical factor in maintaining international competitiveness.

The GWRC also plays a key role in the development and maintenance of key regional infrastructure, and needs to provide leadership to ensure that the region develops a quality infrastructure system and consistency in how standards are applied across the region.

## **5. Conclusion**

The role of the Regional Council in supporting Wellington City Council and other territorial authorities in managing spatial land use, economic development and infrastructure development issues is critical to the successful implementation of the Wellington Regional Strategy and to the future prosperity and competitiveness of the region. It is important that the ten-year plan acknowledges this role and sets out a programme of action to achieve this over both the short and longer-term.

*Contact Officer: Luke Troy, Principal Advisor Urban Development*

## **Supporting Information**

### **1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

The submission closely reflects and supports the Council's draft LTCCP and in particular the Urban Development, Economic Development and Transport strategies.

### **2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

No financial implications.

### **3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

No Treaty of Waitangi implications.

### **4) Decision-Making**

This is not a significant decision - it is a submission prepared as part of a process outlined under the provisions of the Local Government Act.

### **5) Consultation**

#### **a) General Consultation**

This is part of a consultative process under the Local Government Act. Council is not required to consult on this matter.

#### **b) Consultation with Maori**

This is part of a consultative process under the Local Government Act. No separate consultation with Maori is required.

### **6) Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications.

### **7) Consistency with existing policy**

This report is entirely consistent with WCC policy.

## **SUBMISSION**

**Greater Wellington Regional Council's Proposed Ten-Year  
Plan 2006-16 incorporating the 2006/07 Annual Plan**

**April 2006**

## **Introduction**

Wellington City Council (WCC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Greater Wellington Regional Council's (GWRC) Proposed Ten-Year Plan 2006-16. This is an important document that sets out the long-term vision for the region and outlines the outcomes that the Council is working towards and the groups of actions that will be undertaken over this period.

The GWRC Proposed Ten-Year Plan sets out a vision for a 'sustainable region' and outlines a plan of action centred on 7 themes: environment; transport; water supply; parks; safety and flood protection; land; and community. This submission focuses on two areas: (1) strategic issues relating to the overall content of the ten year plan and the role of GWRC; and (2) operational issues relating to infrastructure development, standards and funding.

## **1. STRATEGIC ISSUES**

Examination of these action themes reveals that the GWRC has taken a relatively narrow view of its responsibilities and role. This is supported by the opening statement from the Chairman that the GWRC was asked to consider funding new areas of work and had the ability to do this under the relevant legislation, however they have decided to 'stick to their knitting' and develop a plan that is 'business as usual'.

### **Implementing the Wellington Regional Strategy**

WCC believes that the goal of a sustainable and prosperous region can only be achieved with the strong and combined leadership of all the local government bodies in the region, including the GWRC. The Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) reflects this approach, and the continued support of the GWRC in this process is acknowledged. However the GWRC Proposed Ten-Year Plan does not seem to adequately reflect the important role that GWRC will have in implementing the WRS. The Plan does provide for staff resources over the next 3 years to develop and implement the WRS – approximately \$100,000 of operating expenditure is allocated for each of the next 3 years, however this relatively low level of resource is not coupled with a readily identifiable set of actions to deliver the important strategy areas of the WRS where regional action will be necessary. It is acknowledged that the WRS has not yet been completed, however this should not preclude acknowledgement of the key role for the GWRC in its implementation.

WCC believes that several strategy areas being developed as part of the WRS will require action by GWRC to support and implement the agreed approach. For example under the 'Quality Regional Form and Systems' workstream and the 'Unlocking Economic Potential' workstream, the following areas can be identified:

- Managing urban expansion and avoiding unplanned urban sprawl that doesn't meet WRS objectives for compact corridors and mature sub-regional centres – this may require GWRC to develop growth management tools within its Regional Policy Statement.

- Achieving quality urban design at a macro-scale – this may require GWRC to include tools into its Regional Policy Statement to support spatial land-use outcomes as well as pro-active mechanisms to facilitate better quality physical development outcomes.
- Managing the demand for transport - the GWRC Ten-Year Plan includes considerable investment in public transport infrastructure and services and investment in travel planning, however to ensure that this investment is effective GWRC needs to work closely with the territorial authorities (TAs) to ensure that the patterns of land use and the design of urban areas support public transport use. Additional tools may be required for travel demand management of private vehicles.
- Supporting economic growth and innovation – additional investment will be necessary to facilitate regionally significant developments and infrastructure and for promotion and marketing. The WRS workstream on ‘Internationalisation’ is clearly indicating the need to market the region as a whole and GWRC needs to play a key role in this area.
- Developing and maintaining a regional information base and dataset – the GWRC has a key role to play in collecting and maintaining regional data on issues ranging from employment supply and demand to regional landscape values.

### **Regional leadership**

Another key WRS workstream is around ‘Effective Leadership and Partnership’. One of the driving forces behind the development of the WRS has been that whilst individual territorial authorities clearly have the lead role in managing the effects of land uses under the RMA, the larger metropolitan area of Wellington extends across several territorial boundaries. People, goods and services pass over these administrative boundaries on a daily basis and have many and varied interdependencies. Effective joined-up thinking on a regional basis is necessary to manage its future development and the management of its resources.

The GWRC’s Ten-Year Plan includes investment in a number of key regional resources, for example its parks network, the water supply and its transport network – however it doesn’t appear to recognise the critical link between these and spatial land use issues. How the region is developed, the shape of this development and the way it is designed will all have significant impacts on the demand for the region’s resources. Just managing the ‘end of the pipe’ issues will always only be a partially effective strategy and is likely to result in increased overall costs.

As an example of this approach, examination of the group of actions under the heading of ‘Land’ reveals that actions are confined to: managing pest animals and plants; managing animal health; and promoting sustainable land management through such means as catchment plans, soil conservation, and riparian management). There is no mention of activities relating to managing spatial land use issues at a regional level.

Evidence from other OECD countries is that the key competitiveness factors for cities are centred on four areas: economic structure and support base; quality of infrastructure; governance and leadership; and quality of life and urban environment. Influencing the spatial shape of cities is a fundamental requirement to developing an innovation-led economy, and good urban form provides an optimal environment for business to flourish as well as more efficient use of infrastructure. Strong regional leadership on all

these issues is needed – not just as part of a joint WRS process but utilising the individual implementation tools that each local government has at its disposal – including the GWRC.

The Wellington City Council has identified urban management issues as its five highest strategic priorities for the next 3 years, including: improving residential infill management; achieving high quality urban design; concentrating development in a growth spine; developing and implementing the Wellington Regional Strategy; and protecting and enhancing local sense of place. The WCC draft ten-year plan also places a strong emphasis on managing urban development and economic development.

### **Responding to legislative change**

As noted in the GWRC Ten-Year Plan, recent legislation has encouraged a wider view of the role of local government. The Local Government Act 2002 provides for the purpose of local government to “promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future” and sets out a range of tools to enable this role to be fulfilled. Recent changes to the Resource Management Act 1991 have reinforced the role of regional councils in delivering ‘integrated management’. Section 30(gb) now provides for a regional council to have the additional function of:

“the strategic integration of infrastructure with land use through objectives, policies and methods”

It is the belief of the Wellington City Council that the draft GWRC Ten-Year Plan does not currently respond adequately to these important roles and functions.

### **Comparative regional approaches**

For comparison, WCC examined the draft ten-year plans of other regional councils that included metro areas. Many of these exhibited a very different emphasis from GWRC and considerably more focus on spatial urban development and economic development issues. Some examples are included below.

The Auckland Regional Council draft ten-year plan includes seven key action areas. Some of these action areas mirror those outlined by GWRC – Transport, Open Space and Recreation, and Safety – however a very different emphasis is given by the inclusion of the key action areas of : ‘Built Environment’, ‘Economic Development’ and ‘Regional Leadership and Community Development’. The ten-year plan makes the clear statement that:

“The ARC is responsible for managing the physical and spatial growth of the Auckland region. We provide the decision framework that guides the activities needed to deliver high-quality urban development..... the ARC aims to lift (economic) productivity in the region, and focus on people and skills, business innovation in an international context, and infrastructure for a world-class city.”

The Auckland Region ten-year plan provides for operating spend of approximately \$6 million per annum on the Built Environment action areas and \$3 - \$4 million per annum on the Economic Development action area over the next 3 years.

The Bay of Plenty Regional Council draft ten-year plan includes as one of nine activity groups that of ‘Development’. This includes working with other local governments to:

‘properly respond to emerging land use and growth trends’; working in partnership to ‘promote the sustainable economic development of the region’ and research and analysis of significant development issues from a regional perspective. The ten-year plan provides for operating spend of approximately \$430,000 to \$570,000 per annum on the Development action area over the next 3 years.

## **2. OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

A significant factor for the competitiveness of cities and regions is the quality of their infrastructure. High quality infrastructure serves the needs of the local economy and provides a measure of assurance to business and the community.

At a regional level, the GWRC plays a very important role in the development and maintenance of such quality infrastructure. This role is direct in the provision of services and through influencing. The GWRC provides direct services such as: bulk water, flood protection, and transport. In addition, and arising from its role as a consenting authority, the GWRC is in a unique position to influence the standards of discharges to air, land and water by setting and monitoring consent conditions for other TAs in the region. It also has an important leadership role in the regional management of waste, energy, biodiversity, recreation and landscape.

However Wellington City Council is concerned that there is no clear strategy outlined in the proposed ten-year plan to address the opportunities arising from these important GWRC functions, or to identify and set tangible objectives towards harmonising and improving the quality of regional infrastructure.

We acknowledge improvements to joint resource consent hearings and general partnership working with community planting groups along key catchments and look forward to their continuation.

The Wellington City Council strongly encourages the GWRC to:

1. Provide leadership by example in terms of its asset management practice by utilising internationally accepted standards. Managing assets created for the provision of direct services whilst adhering to maintenance, renewal and upgrade principles, and basing these principles on agreed levels of service; providing customers with a range of options to meet future demand including service level modifications.
2. Assess the efficiency of the services provided through an objective and thorough exploration of available alternatives to better service the regional community.
3. Ensure that its practices in providing flood protection services do not create imbalances in the responsibility and consequent infrastructure investment policies by TAs in the region.
4. Adopt a more proactive posture in monitoring the environmental effects of pollution in the common discharge basin. It is unacceptable to Wellington City Council that there is no assessment of environmental effects report arising from the known pollution of the Waiwhetu stream. It is entirely possible that the Wellington City Council’s sewerage pollution elimination investment of some \$70 million over recent years has been in vain as the positive results of this investment might have been negated by the discharges into the harbour of pollutants from that stream. The GWRC has no way of assessing this possibility as it has no monitoring regime in

place. It is acknowledged that the draft LTCCP includes resources for the preparation of a Waiwhetu Stream Action Plan.

5. Modify its stance in terms of setting resource consent conditions for discharges to water. The GWRC should utilise its unique position to ensure consistency and balance in setting conditions. This would ensure that all TAs actively contribute to the improvement of the quality of the regional infrastructure and by extension to the overall quality of the natural and economic environment of the region.
6. Take a stronger leadership role in a regional landscape categorisation exercise to develop a more consistent understanding of regionally outstanding landscapes.
7. Facilitate a more consistent regional approach to the management of waste through landfills.
8. Take a leadership role on energy management, including considering a more rapid move towards increased use of renewables and increased efficiency in its own operations. WCC remains very concerned about regional transport strategies that seem to indicate increasing focus on private vehicle travel as opposed to reducing that travel through good urban form and stronger focus on public transport, active modes and road pricing.
9. Allocate resources to enable Te Araroa Walkway and a coastal path from Owhiro Bay to Makara Beach to be created in the next three years, noting the absence of any regional park within WCC (with the exception of a small part of Belmont Regional Park).
10. Consider alternatives to the construction of new dams or the development of new sources for water supply. It should be noted that urban form can play a role in reducing demand for water.

Reference is also made to the submission previously made by Wellington City Council in April 2005 on the LTCCP 2003-2013 and proposed Annual Plan 2005/06. This outlined a number of issues relating to:

- rail funding
- flood protection funding policy
- funding for regional tourism facilities including the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary and the Marine Education Centre.

Many of these issues raised in this submission remain relevant. In particular whilst WCC acknowledges the pivotal role that GWRC has played in the establishment of the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary Trust, it is disappointing that the GWRC has not provided any ongoing funding for this important regional facility. Similarly it is disappointing that GWRC has not provided funding for the establishment of the Marine Education Centre, which would provide a regional facility that contributes to the region's economy and the community's understanding of biodiversity.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, the Wellington City Council believes that the GWRC has missed an important opportunity to take a leadership role on critical spatial land use, economic development, infrastructure development and standards issues affecting this region's future, and that the draft Ten-Year Plan does not adequately reflect the work required to implement the Wellington Regional Strategy in which it is a key partner.