

ENVIRONMENTAL REFERENCE GROUP: MEMBERS' SUBMISSION

Introduction

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG) welcomes the chance to offer the Strategy and Policy Committee a shared statement from its members and asks the Committee receive it in conjunction with the officers' update report being presented.

The ERG has appreciated being involved early in the development of Council's environmental initiatives. Council officers were responsive to ERG members' suggestions about policies and initiatives such as the draft 2009/19 LTCCP, planning for the implications of the Waste Minimisation Act, the Climate Change Action Plan and continued discussion on water conservation planning.

How we engage

The ERG tries to keep its feedback on issues on a strategic level though given that we are all Wellingtonians, we sometimes stray into the operational details as these are of interest to us too. We would like to stress the importance of early engagement as this gives us the best opportunity to provide useful feedback into Council policy development. For the coming calendar year, the ERG would like focus on the following broad areas in relation to how we engage:

- provide feedback to policies and projects in a workshop format
- explore opportunity for having input into the consultation phase of the policy development (as opposed to just focusing on early engagement, which is still very important to us)
- continue to engage guest speakers for the benefit of both ERG members but also Councillors and officers
- trial having agenda items where ERG members discuss their current (or previous) work focus, research and/or volunteer work and tailor the discussion so that it provides input into a Council policy or project under development.

Political engagement

The ERG looks forward to continuing to work closely with the Council in the coming term, particularly the two Environmental Portfolio Leaders, Councillors Wade-Brown and Pannett. We are also keen to enhance our communication with the Portfolio Leaders for Climate Change and Transport/Urban Development, Councillors Ahipene-Mercer and Foster, as these areas have overlaps into the environmental area.

Using the ERG's skill set and networks to improve policy development

The ERG members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. The ERG members have well established local and national networks. These networks, in particular, could help provide better engagement on issues such as climate change, energy security, sustainable transport and water use, energy efficiency and renewable energy, sustainable treatment and disposal of waste, and biodiversity.

Resignations and recruitment

Three valuable members have left in recent months: Ms Liz Hibbs, Mr Ian Shearer and Dr Ralph Chapman. The ERG is currently advertising for new members to take up the vacant positions. The recruitment process is scheduled to be finalised in January so that new members can attend the first meeting of the New Year in February 2010.

Our priorities for 2010

Priorities for 2010 are to complete the recruitment process, continue to improve on how we engage with the Council (as well as how the Council engages with us) and provide input into the following:

- 2010/11 Draft Annual Plan
- Draft Climate Change Action Plan
- Waste Minimisation and Management Plan
- Water Conservation Plan
- Town Belt Legislation and Management Plan review
- Capital Spaces Open Space Strategy review
- Wellington 2040 - The City Strategy
- the District Plan review
- transport and urban development implementation plans such as walking, cycling and bus priority measures (as they relate to the subject of reducing greenhouse gas emissions).

[To be presented by Hamish Allardice and Sea Rotmann, co-chairs of the Wellington City Council Environmental Reference Group.]