

Environmental Reference Group Meeting Minutes 18 April 2011 Committee Room 2, Wellington City Council

Present:

Hamish Allardice (Co-chair)
Sea Rotmann (Co-chair)
Peter Gilbert
Phil Hancock
Sarah Free
Claire Graeme
Bev Abbott
Claire Graeme
Tushara Kodikara
Councillor Ritchie
Councillor Lester

Apologies

Philip Mladenov
Kathryn Maxwell
Mike Ennis
Marc Slade

WCC Officers:

Zach Rissel (Senior Policy Advisor)
Phillipa Bowron (Senior Strategy Advisor)
Baz Kaufman (Senior Advisor Planning)

Agenda

1. 2011/12 Draft Annual Plan
2. Wellington 2040

2011/12 Draft Annual Plan

Councillor Ritchie gave brief presentation on the Council's 2011/12 Draft Annual Plan stressing following key themes:

- Affordable rates
- Strong infrastructure
- Earthquake prone buildings
- Wellington 2040.

Listed savings to be found from Environmental Area as well as investments for 2011/12 eg

- 3-water upgrade including strengthening resevoirs and stormwater pump to accommodate runoff near the ICSC
- Climate change actions.

Discussed the proposal for the feasibility study for a deep-water pool.

Feedback from group included:

- Strong support to strengthen water reservoirs for earthquake resilience.
- Query as to why costs of stormwater pump stations were not budgeted for the ICSC and that these costs should have been covered by the Recreation Department (explanation that Rec Wellington would never budget for stormwater improvements and that these costs were included in overall ICSC budget)

- If pool initiative proceeds, can Council ensure other users won't have increased fees (e.g. Tawa Pool)
- What type of energy will be used to heat pools? Energy efficiency of pools in general should be a priority.
- Comments that Council should focus on the higher priorities (rather than pools) such as earthquake strengthening.
- Several queries as to the necessity for a deep water pool and whether it was needed or a priority – Cr Lester addressed the queries and said Council had a capacity issue for pool use during peak times.
- Cr Ritchie spoke of the option of school pool programme instead of the new pool.
- Query has to why \$5m would need to be spent on parking for the new pool if it is on main bus route.
- Comment that children need to learn to swim (very important) but that an affordable option needs to be chosen to address the priority.
- Query as to the reasons for deferral of biodiversity funding and Baz Kaufman identified that the Parks team was ahead of its performance measures/targets were exceeded so funding is reviewed and that funding for biodiversity will be reviewed for 2012/22 LTP.
- Query as to why library budgets were being reduced when events budgets were not and there was explanation that funding for these areas come from different sources (e.g. libraries – general rates/user charges, events – downtown levy). Cr Lester commented that savings identified are found in areas where we can afford savings.

ERG decided to put in a oral submission to the Council stating that the feasibility study for the deepwater pool was not a priority compared to other bigger issues facing the city. Because of demand

Wellington 2040

Phillipa Bowron spoke about the Wellington 2040 Strategy and the four strategic directions:

1. Dynamic city centre – focus on the CBD as engine room of region (eg live, work, entertainment), improve walkability and compactness; good planning
2. Connected city – people and broadband connections (physical and virtual)
3. Eco City
4. People centered city – improving neighborhoods.

Feedback

- General positive support for “Smart/Green” and four strategic directions.
- A connected city is also about transport (getting into and out of the city). This should be emphasized in that part. Phillipa agreed and outlined that it was also about connections between NZ cities.
- Transport canvasses across all themes and needs special mention. Getting the transport bit right is fundament and transport is the single most important area.
- Phillipa mentioned that the strategy will set some directions and action plans/initiatives will follow in Long Term Plans.
- Avoid making decisions that contradict the plans – eg. The Roads of National Significance issues. We would lose smart/green status if RONS proposals were implemented.
- Natural disasters and resilience should be highlighted as a key area. Key resilience issues need to be properly addressed.
 - Phillipa – totally is acknowledged across all themes/directions

- Like “smart/green” concept but what was the Government’s view of this vision? Comments that Wellington and a smart/green vision can be undermined by the Government’s decisions
 - Phillipa discussed how Council is in a much better position to challenge/influence/partner with Government decisions on investment and policy if we have a coherent and well balanced strategy
- How are we going to measure “smart”? Is it being self reliant or independent? How do we measure resilience?
- Important not to silo themes and try to overlap as much as possible. ie. We won’t be successful on the 2040 vision if we only achieve success in one or two of the strategic directions. Needs to be all.
- General congratulations on the progress so far.

General Business

- Extraordinary Council meeting was scheduled to discuss Roads of National Significance issue. ERG requested to speak but our Democratic Service unit could only accommodate five speakers. ERG was not selected for speaking but the following statement was tabled.

“The Wellington City Council Environmental Reference Group (ERG) supports the motion that there should be full public consultation before any final decision on Wellington RONS (Road of National Significance) transport improvements is made. In particular the ERG would like plans to be made publicly available, and any roading changes to be considered in association with other long term transport options.”