
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

COUNCILLOR CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE – ACCELERATING NOW 2007

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the Accelerating Now climate change conference attended by Councillor Ahipene-Mercer, 2-5 May, 2007 in Melbourne, Australia.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*

3. Background

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives – Australia / New Zealand (ICLEI) in partnership with the City of Melbourne hosted an international conference in early May 2007. The conference was aimed at facilitating discussion within the local government sector to promote tangible improvements in global environmental conditions through the cumulative impact of local initiatives.

Councillor Ahipene-Mercer along with John McGrath (Director – Policy) and Dave Campbell (Energy Manager) attended the conference. Attendance of Councillor Ahipene-Mercer and Dave Campbell was subsidised by ICLEI NZ.

4. Discussion

Over the course of the three day conference delegates were given the opportunity to attend several presentations from municipality and industry representatives from around Australasia. The conference also facilitated group workshops with focused and interactive discussions on an array of topics including climate change and energy management. Delegates chose sessions by interest and how well the topic of discussion would relate to the work happening in their local authority.

Outside of the conference venue, the organisers made arrangements for a variety of tours within the Melbourne area that highlighted sustainable features of the city and region. The tours ranged in focus from sustainable building

solutions to steps being taken in Melbourne toward soft engineering solutions for water management.

In addition to the set schedule of workshops, tours and presentations, the conference facilitated several networking opportunities where delegates could meet with representatives from industry, and territorial local authorities (TLAs) from around Australia and New Zealand. In total over 450 delegates attended, including 55 from New Zealand.

Benefits

The three members of the Wellington delegation attended a total of 6 different workshops ranging from sustainable public lighting technology to advancing local economic development. Throughout the conference there were two key messages being discussed that had commonality with all the local authorities represented:

- community engagement is essential to ensure wide acceptance and uptake of sustainability measures within the cities represented
- the need to lead by example as a local authority and ensure that council operations demonstrate sustainable behaviour thus giving credibility to the message being delivered to the community.

In addition to the learnings garnered from the various speakers and interactive working sessions, the opportunities for networking during the conference allowed for interaction with other New Zealand authorities and the chance to share ideas and experiences. Each of the major urban centres within New Zealand had sent a delegation and it proved valuable to discuss progress to date and areas where collaboration would prove useful. Throughout New Zealand, city and regional councils find themselves at varying stages of understanding as well as planning measurable action. Drawing on the experiences of those further ahead, and being a resource to those further behind, will prove invaluable as New Zealand tackles national climate change problems.

Of specific value to Wellington City Council, the conference sparked further thought on existing initiatives as well as initiatives that perhaps other cities have embarked on and would be appropriate for Wellington. Several topics had strong links with the work Wellington City Council is currently undertaking in support of its aspirational vision of carbon neutrality:

- managing in-house energy use
- developing a robust action plan to deliver on targets and goals set
- the need for further education to better understand the complex issues coming to the fore (e.g. Carbon trading)
- the need for regular and transparent monitoring and reporting on successes and failures with regard to greenhouse gas mitigation

- a clear plan for community engagement and key milestones to ensure the engagement is rewarding and beneficial to both the Council and the community as a whole
- working with business and industry leaders to steer the city towards a sustainable future
- developing guidelines to shape the building industry. Wellington City Council has a real opportunity to lead by example due to the large number of assets it owns
- establishing strong and fruitful links with other TLAs in the region to enable collaboration and learning from the experience of others.

5. Conclusion

As a part of Wellington City Council's aspirational vision for carbon neutrality, a Councillor working party has been established to help steer the best way forward for Wellington. Attendance at conferences such as 'Accelerating Now' prove invaluable in providing evidence of wins on the board for other municipalities and how best to apply those lessons to the Wellington environment.

The indicative work programme being developed to support longer term greenhouse gas reduction targets for both the Council and Community encompasses a lot of the lessons learned from this conference. It is important to maintain strong relationships with other authorities throughout New Zealand and the rest of Australasia as the collaboration needed to be successful in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions is without precedent. Furthermore, there is a wealth of knowledge throughout the world that can be a resource for Wellington City Council in developing its strategy towards carbon neutrality.

Councillor Ahipene-Mercer

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

This report relates to several long-term outcomes from the Council's overall strategic direction, as reflected in the LTCCP.

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

This report has no financial implications.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

This report has no Treaty implications.

4) Decision-Making

This report does not require a significant decision to be made.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

No consultation was required for this report.

b) Consultation with Maori

No consultation was required for this report.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with the outcomes and priorities of the Environment Strategy as reflected in the LTCCP.