
REPORT 6
(1215/52/IM)

ADVISORY GROUPS – REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose of Report

This report presents amended terms of reference (ToR) for the Environmental Reference Group (ERG) and the Pacific Advisory Group (PAG) for the Council's approval.

2. Executive Summary

The Environment Reference Group's ToR has now been reviewed and an amended ToR is presented for Committee approval. The ToR now includes provisions similar to those agreed to in the reviews undertaken on the Pacific Advisory Group (PAG), Youth Council and Disability Reference Group (DRG) in 2007. For example, the ToR now includes clauses encouraging liaison between the groups, limiting appointment to a three year period, and providing for co-Chairs.

Payment for the ERG is recommended in recognition of the expert advice the members provide and their links to broader environment-focused networks – both of which the Council might not otherwise have access to.

In addition, due to an increasing workload, an amendment to the PAG's ToR is recommended to enable the group to meet once a month rather than once every two months. If approved, the additional funding required for the ERG's and the PAG's operation (\$20,280) will be found from within current budgets.

Further work is underway to review the Road Safety Reference Group (RSRG) this year to consider its scope, role and membership, and the best ongoing structure for the group going forward.

Broader work is also being undertaken on the Council's engagement with communities and sector groups as part of the Trust and Public Confidence work programme. A project within that work programme will examine the mechanisms Council uses to engage with specific communities and recommend a strategic context for decision-making around advisory groups, including if or when a group should be established and why.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Recommend that Council agree to the amendments to the Environmental Reference Group's Terms of Reference (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).*
- 3. Recommend that Council agree to the amendments to the Pacific Advisory Group's Terms of Reference (attached as Appendix 2 to the report).*
- 4. Note that further work is underway to review the Road Safety Reference Group.*

4. Background

The Council has the following five advisory groups:¹

- Disability Reference Group (DRG)
- Youth Council
- Pacific Advisory Group (PAG)
- Environmental Reference Group (ERG)
- Road Safety Reference Group (RSRG).

Reviews were undertaken on the PAG, Youth Council and DRG in 2007, resulting in changes to those groups' ToRs.

Work has now been completed on the ERG's ToR and a further amendment is recommended for the PAG's ToR.

5. Discussion

5.1 Environment Reference Group

The ERG was formed in mid-2001 to provide Council with a sounding board and peer-review group on issues relating to the management of the natural environment. In August 2005, to match the responsibilities of the new Environment Portfolio, the ERG's ToR was reviewed to clarify that the natural

¹ In the context of this report, advisory groups are those groups that meet the following criteria. They:

- are established by Council resolution
- have a main purpose around providing advice to the Council, with no delegated authority to make decisions
- have a membership that is either representative of a community/sector group or able to fairly represent the range of views in that community/sector group
- have an elected member appointed to the group.

environment includes energy and waste issues, and to expand the membership accordingly.

The group has suggested further amendments to its ToR. The current ToR, with proposed amendments shown as tracked-changes, is attached as Appendix 1.

To a large extent, the proposed amendments bring the ToR into line with those of the other advisory groups. The new ToR:

- includes a clause encouraging increased liaison between the different advisory groups
- specifies a two year review requirement
- changes the SPC report back requirements from twice a year to once a year
- enables the ERG to have a non-Councillor chair and/or co-chairs
- limits membership terms to three years (with re-appointment possible if the person wishes to reapply) and provides for the removal of members
- specifies meeting dates as roughly every two months, rather than in advance of every SPC meeting
- provides additional information around roles and responsibilities
- removes the requirement for SPC to make a decision on group membership if the group cannot agree.

The group agreed that it did not require a quorum along the same lines as the other groups.

Minor editorial changes have also been made to the ToR.

5.1.2 Payment

Since its inception, ERG members have not been paid a meeting fee, although group members have been able to use basement car parks and be reimbursed for travel expenses upon request.

Payment has not been made to the group as they have not been seen to be representative of a community that they are accountable to – which is the rationale used to pay both DRG and PAG members.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that ERG members both provide a level of expert advice that the Council might not otherwise have access to, as well as linkages to broader environment-focused communities.²

Both expert advice and extended environmental networks have become increasingly important to the Council as it works through a large number of environmental issues, including the environmental education network, Transition Towns and ongoing input into the Council's climate change

² The most recent selection process was very competitive, with 40 applications received for 3 positions. The current criteria requiring members to have “links into the community and a willingness to utilise those links” was emphasized within selection decisions.

measures. In the coming year, the ERG will also be asked to focus on environmental objectives and outcomes within the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).

For these reasons, payment is recommended for ERG members at the same level paid to DRG and PAG members - \$110 per meeting for members and \$150 per meeting for the Chair. This will require an additional \$10,140 in funding (assuming maximum meeting attendance), which will be found from within current budgets.

5.2 Pacific Advisory Group

A substantial review of the PAG was undertaken in 2007, resulting in a new ToR being adopted in June last year.

In October 2007 an almost entirely new membership was elected and a new Chair appointed. After a few months' operation, the new group expressed concern that the meeting frequency of once every two months (six per year) would not allow the group to achieve its intended purpose.

Officers have reviewed the group's workload since October 2007 and its forward programme and agree that increasing the meeting frequency of the group is justified. Monthly meetings will ensure Pacific communities are regularly canvassed for their views and that the PAG is able to provide input into Council issues and policies – particularly including the LTCCP process.

Officers recommend that the ToR is amended as shown in Appendix 2. The cost of an additional six meetings per year is \$10,140, which will be found from within current budgets.³

5.3 Road Safety Reference Group

The RSRG has not been reviewed for a number of years. Initial conversations between elected members and officers indicate that it may be beneficial to expand the group's purpose, scope and membership in light of emerging opportunities and developments in the transport area.

The organisations and groups that currently take part in the RSRG⁴ are scheduled to meet in the coming month. The group will be asked to consider their effectiveness and whether or not the group should:

- broaden its scope to focus on “sustainable transport” (which would include other projects that focus on changing behaviours around transport, such

³ The original budget established for the operation of the PAG was \$26,820. This accounted for officer time, administration and catering costs, as well as payment for 15 representatives for six meetings per year.

⁴ These include Transit, Land Transport NZ, the Police, AA, Cycling Aware, Living Streets Aotearoa.

as Travel Demand Management, cycling and walking plans) in addition to Safer Roads

- broaden its membership, to ensure the appropriate government agencies, advocacy groups and community groups are represented.

Depending on the outcome of the group's meeting, a new ToR will be developed in consultation with the group and presented to this Committee (and Council) for final decision-making.

5.4 Engagement Framework

Work is ongoing to consider the Council's further engagement with communities and sector groups in Wellington within the Trust and Public Confidence work programme. A project within that work programme will examine the mechanisms Council uses to engage with specific communities and recommend a strategic context for decision-making around advisory groups, including if or when a group should be established and why.

6. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to approve the attached amended terms of reference for the Environmental Reference Group and the Pacific Advisory Group.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

Advisory groups contribute to the Council's Governance Strategy – particularly the following desired outcome:

7.2(b) More actively engaged – Wellington will operate an open and honest decision-making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.

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

Advisory groups are currently supported through the business as usual budgets of the responsible business units. Those advisory groups that receive payment are paid from project C534 – Elections, governance and democratic services.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

This report does not have any implications for the Treaty of Waitangi.

4) Decision-Making

This report does not involve a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

The proposed changes have been discussed with the affected advisory groups.

b) Consultation with Maori

Maori have not been consulted about this paper.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with other Council policies.