

# ***Environmental Reference Group***

## ***Terms of Reference – March 2011***

### **1. Purpose**

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG) will provide the Council with advice and a peer review group on issues relating to the management of the natural environment, including water, energy and waste management.

The ERG is an advisory group, however it, will not be considered to be the sole mechanism for representing the community's views on natural environment issues.

### **2. Role**

The role of the ERG is to:

- provide feedback and advise the Council on its natural environment policy, planning and asset management matters (including the development of the Council's Long Term Plan) in the developmental stages of all relevant projects
- be an information conduit to and from the Council
- identify and comment on the broad spectrum of community expectations and concerns associated with the management of the natural environment.

The ERG will not have an independent budget to commission work or undertake activities outside of the group's advisory role, although it can recommend to the appropriate Council committee that work is undertaken on certain natural environment policy areas.

### **3. Membership**

#### **Number and make-up of members**

The ERG will have up to 15 members.

A Councillor will be appointed to the group to act as a liaison between the group and the Council's other elected members. The appointed Council, liaison officer and other officers of the Council are not members of the ERG but support the work of the group.

In addition to the above members, a representative from Council's mana whenua partners will be invited to be members of the ERG. If mana whenua representatives are unable to participate, relevant Council officers will maintain a communication link to assist in providing their perspective in the work of the ERG.

Role descriptions for members of the ERG, the appointed Councillor liaison and the Council liaison officer are included in **Appendix A**.

### **3.1 Criteria for membership**

ERG members will have:

- a familiarity with the natural environment of Wellington City
- a degree of involvement (or knowledge of) practical environmental initiatives
- demonstrated awareness of and enthusiasm for natural environmental issues
- links into the community and a willingness to utilise those links.
- an ability to represent a balanced view.

Membership of the group should include:

- an appropriate balance of men and women and representation from youth where possible
- an appropriate range of experience and expertise required for the group to adequately perform their role.

### **3.2 Chair/Co-Chairs**

The group will be chaired by a member elected by the group. Co-chairs are permitted.

Should the Chair/Co-Chairs not be present for a meeting, the group will elect a Chair for that meeting.

## **4. Term of Appointment**

The standard term of appointment will be three years. The term of appointment can be less than three years if a member:

- resigns, or
- misses three consecutive meetings.

A member can apply to be appointed for a second term.

No member can sit on the group for more than two consecutive terms.

The Chair will hold the position for a maximum of three years. A nomination process will be conducted at the conclusion of the three years.

## **5. Selection and Removal of Members**

Recruitment of new members will be managed by the ERG liaison officer.

The Council will call for applications from within the city's boundaries via a number of different media (newspapers, social media, the Council website, community radio etc).

New members will be selected by the ERG liaison officer and the Co-Chairs of the ERG to fill any gaps in the group's membership.

Membership of the group shall cease if a member:

- resigns, or
- fails to attend at least three consecutive meetings over the period of one year.

A member can be removed from the ERG under exceptional circumstances where the behaviour of the members is considered detrimental to the effective operation of the group.

If a member resigns or is removed from the group, the Council will work to fill any vacancies as soon as possible.

## **6. Reporting**

The group will report to the Strategy and Policy Committee annually in the last quarter of the year. The report will outline work undertaken, number of meetings held and attendance, the group's achievements and any issues it wishes the Council to consider further.

The agenda and minutes of the group's meetings will be available on the Council's website.

## **7. Frequency of Meetings**

The group will meet approximately every two months.

## **8. Operation**

The maintenance and servicing of the group will primarily be the responsibility of the appropriate Council directorate. The group will be supported by a Council liaison officer who will be responsible for compiling agendas, writing minutes, maintaining a conflict of interest log and providing other administrative and advisory support to the group.

It is also expected that members of the Council's other business units will liaise closely with the group as appropriate.

### **8.1 Member induction**

All new members joining the ERG will receive an induction pack and information explaining the Council's function and processes and the purpose and role of the ERG.

### **8.2 Conflict of interest**

Members will be asked to complete a conflict of interest form when they join the ERG and at the beginning of each year they sit on the group. The Council liaison officer will be responsible for providing members with a conflict of interest form as part of new member induction packs and to all members at the beginning of each year.

## **9. Quorum**

Half of the members of the group (not including vacancies) must be present for the group to have a quorum.

## **10. Payment**

Members will be paid \$110 and the Chair \$150 for every full ERG meeting they attend, to a maximum of six meetings per year. If the group decides to have co-Chairs, the additional \$40 available to the Chair will be split between the co-Chairs.

The Council will also support the group by providing refreshments.

## **11. Conflict Resolution**

Should conflict occur, the Chair and the group will be responsible for working together to resolve the conflict in the first instance. If the conflict persists, the Council will only intervene at the request of the majority of the group members.

## **12. Review**

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed as required. All changes to the Terms of Reference will be subject to the approval of the appropriate Wellington City Council committee and Council.

## **Appendix A: Role descriptions for the Environmental Reference Group Chair, Members, Liaison Officers and Appointed Councillor**

### **The Chair/Co-Chairs will:**

- Chair ERG meetings fairly and in a manner that allows the group to fulfill its role
- meet with officers and the appointed Councillor, as required, prior to ERG meetings
- encourage open communication where all members can contribute to conversations
- not allow individuals or sub-groups to dominate the meeting
- work with Council officers to compile meeting agenda
- oversee the development and completion of the group's annual work programme
- act as the spokesperson for the Environmental Reference Group and represent the views of the group as required.

### **Environmental Reference Group Members will:**

- work collaboratively with other members of the group to fulfill the ERG's role and responsibilities
- where appropriate, share ERG information from and with members' networks.
- provide advice on the development and implementation of the Council's policies, projects, planning and service delivery
- actively participate in ERG meetings
- be available to attend any other meetings that may occur
- bring relevant issues and opportunities to the ERG
- canvass individual view on the management of the natural environment within Wellington City as required.

### **Officers will:**

- be responsible for the administration of the group.
- work with members of the ERG to develop an annual ERG Work Programme
- induct new Environmental Reference Group members, compile agendas, write minutes, maintain a conflict of interest log and provide other administrative and advisory support to the ERG.

### **The Elected member/Councillor**

The Councillor appointed to the Environmental Reference Group is not a member.

The Councillor's role is to:

- act as a liaison and information conduit between the Council and the ERG, conveying, if necessary, the concerns of the group
- provide, in conjunction with officers, information, advice and an explanation of the Council's political process and agreed Council policy where required and requested by the group.