
CHAIR'S REVIEW – ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

1. Purpose of Report

This report outlines the progress of the Environment Committee against the Council work programme approved in February 2014 by Governance Finance and Planning Committee.

2. Recommendations

The Chair recommends that the Governance, Finance and Planning Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*

3. The Purpose of the Committee

The Committee has a focus on climate change initiatives, enhancing the city's open spaces, protecting biodiversity in plant, bird and animal life, and ensuring there are high quality outdoor areas for residents and visitors to enjoy. The committee is also responsible for waste minimisation, energy efficiency and the three waters (drinking water, storm-water and wastewater).

4. Summary – the focus to June 2014

I wish to thank my colleagues (Mayor Wade-Brown and Councillors Free, Sparrow, Ahipene-Mercer, Foster, Ritchie and Lee) on the Committee for their hard work over the last six months. The staff have also done a tremendous amount of work in each subject area.

As part of the new committee structure, I have attempted to ensure that the work the Committee is doing is closely aligned with Council's overarching strategies and the work programme through a specific Forward Programme for the Committee which was agreed to in May.

The first six months has focused on a number of key projects. A significant milestone was approving the draft Wellington Town Belt Bill which aims to protect the Town Belt for future generations, for public consultation. The Bill is the culmination of many years work and I would like to thank all members of the public, staff and councillors who have contributed. The final round of oral hearings was heard in late May 2014 and we hope to have the Bill considered by Parliament before Christmas 2014.

There have been a number of Living City project updates and grants.

We also received updates on our Climate Change Action Plan and Green House Gas inventory. Of particular interest were the regions' emissions results and the downward trend against rising population and GDP. The Committee has emphasised a need for action around climate change and using innovative ways to engage people in the City to contribute to meeting the targets in our Action Plan. Initiatives like School Gen and the Smart Energy Challenge are good examples of this. The table below provides a bit more detail on School Gen and the Smart Energy Challenge.

Initiative	Description
Schoolgen	A joint-funding partnership with Genesis Energy. It involves providing subsidised solar panels to 16 Wellington schools. This also includes curriculum-linked science and maths materials relating to electricity, renewable energy, the sun and climate change.
Smart Energy Challenge	Working collaboratively with business, social enterprise organisations and the community to develop and fund community projects that increase energy efficiency and renewable energy in Wellington. Our partners include, Enspiral, Generation Zero and PledgeMe with ongoing support from Deloitte, Kiwibank, NZ Post, GWRC and the Sustainability Trust.

We have approved a draft management plan for consultation for the four botanic gardens of Wellington, oral hearings will be held in August. We have also agreed to undertake special consultation on reinstating the collection and transportation of waste bylaw. The wider trade waste bylaw will be considered later in the triennium. Work is also being done around managing open spaces more effectively given the increased popularity of these spaces.

Given we have three new councillors on the Committee; there has been an attempt to introduce members to a few aspects of the Council's business in the environmental area with a couple of site visits and briefings on a variety of issues.

4.1. Our Monitoring Programme

Monitoring of CCOs and Council projects and expenditure is an important part of this Committee's work, especially given that water and waste is so budget intensive. We received and reviewed the quarterly report on Council performance in the environment area. In addition to that we focused on 3 areas, The Our Living City programme, Council Controlled Organisations and the Natural Environment part of Our Capital Spaces.

Our Living City

We received updates on the Our Living programme and considered a number of grant applications from the Our Living City Grant Fund.

One of the questions for Committee to consider is how the various funding pools Council manage fit together and how each project aligns with our various objectives. We will attempt to address these issues as part of the LTP process.

CCOs

We have continued to build positive working relationship with the CCO's (the Zoo, Sanctuary and Capacity) that come within the sphere of this committee. As a Committee we are keen to ensure that CCO's have clear expectations and understand our governance role around their performance. All organisations are working very hard to ensure that their work is aligned with Council's objectives. I am personally pleased at the progress they are all making.

The Zoo has recently established an Animal Welfare Committee which I sit on. We have met once and I hope through this committee that we will be able to build on the excellent work that the Zoo is already doing in this area.

We considered the draft statements of intent for 2014/15 and the letters of expectation to these organisations. We also reviewed the quarterly reports for the 2013/14 year and had presentations to the committee from all three CCOs. This is an area of focus for the next 6 months.

Our Capital Spaces

One project that we are concentrating on in this area is the completion of the Outer Town Belt. The aim here is to have a walkway eventually from Karori and from the South Coast through to Spicer's Recreation area and Tawa and Porirua at the outer boundary of Wellington City. This is a top priority for Our Capital Spaces.

4.2. Relationships

The Committee's responsibilities cross over with a number of other groups and organisations. An initial area of focus has been on working with the Environmental Reference group on revising their terms of reference. As a Committee we value the group and want to ensure that they are able to contribute fully to Council's objectives.

A key area of focus will be around consultation and engagement around options for the Island Bay Seawall after it was partially destroyed in the storm last year. There are a variety of views in the community about the wall's future and after listening to feedback from the community, it has been decided to run a consultation process in partnership with the community to look at all options this year. My hope is the process will prove to be an example of best practice public engagement so that the community can own whatever decision is arrived at. I would also hope that this discussion will result in some productive conversations around sea level rise and resilience.

The Committee has also had a range of public participation and briefings from other sector groups.

4.3. The Committee's Portfolio work

There are two portfolio leaders on the Committee: Cr Ritchie (Portfolio, Natural Environment) and Cr Lee (Climate Change).

As above, the findings of the regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the implications for Wellington City were pleasing. Next steps include reviewing targets and understanding what we need to do next to meet the City's emissions targets. The big areas are transport and home and business energy use. Progress on the actions in the Climate Change Action Plan, including the Smart Energy Capital will contribute. Further analysis will be done as part of the preparation for the LTP.

In the natural environment area, the focus has been around preparing the Town Belt Bill which has involved a very significant amount of work on the part of the Portfolio Leader and staff. The freedom camping bylaw has also taken up some time as it gives rise to a number of complex issues. Preparation of the Botanic Gardens Management Plan has also involved a significant amount of work.

The chair and portfolio leaders have attended numerous meetings and events to discuss a variety of issues with stakeholders.

The Committee also considered a range of operational decisions on easements, licences and disposals.

5. The Key Focus for the next six months

The Committee has had a productive first 6 months and is getting to grips with the new structure and delegations. With a new structure comes the ongoing challenge to ensure the committee remains focused on actions that make the biggest contribution to our environmental objectives. A key priority is the preparation for the Long term Plan and reviewing our service delivery plans. Other work currently on the programme includes:

- Working with the community on the Island Bay Seawall project
- Review of the natural hazards chapter of the District Plan
- Climate change and natural environment impacts of the Wellington Plan and other large projects Council is considering
- Reviewing the Service Management Plans (formerly the Asset Management Plans) for the Three Waters, Waste systems and natural environment areas.
- Implementation of new governance arrangements for Capacity (part of the chair's role specifically as I'm part of the negotiating team)

- Monitoring the Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy, potentially through a new joint committee where we would have a representative (subject to Council approval at the time of writing)
- Agreeing the final Water Sensitive Urban Design Guide and implementing key provisions from it
- Looking at solutions to create more resilience in our water system through a under the harbour pipeline or potentially a new reservoir if satisfactory funding arrangements can be secured.
- Introduction of more drinking fountains
- Introduction of a Trade Waste Bylaw
- Biodiversity Action Plan review
- Public Spaces Bylaw review
- Animal Control Bylaw review
- Draft Suburban Reserves Management Plan
- Options available to Council to purchase land to complete the Outer Town Belt
- Finalising of the Wellington Town Belt Bill
- Introduction of a Freedom Camping Bylaw
- Progress on the Children's Garden
- Submissions on Resource Management Act reforms and the impact on the natural environment

*Councillor Iona Pannett
Chairperson, Environment Committee*