



Report 07.203
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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Divisional Managers' Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the activities and progress and any matters that have arisen since the Committee's previous meeting held on 20 March 2007.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The Departmental Managers' reports are attached.

4. Divisional matters

4.1 Catchment Management – Geoff Dick

The attached Department Manager's reports provide a very comprehensive coverage of the Division's activities over the last report period. I have also attached the executive summary (Attachment 4) from the divisional quarterly review management report to 31 March 2007.

The Division is materially on track to complete the annual work programme, however there are issues in all areas that remain challenges to manage or complete. These range from completing the set up of the Kopuaranga scheme, to the complex Waiwhetu investigation, to the setting up of the Hill Country Advisory group, progressing the RPMS and completing some major Bovine TB control work in Upper Hutt and Otaki.

The year has also presented some financial challenges to meet our budget targets. Managers' have been asked to very carefully monitor and control expenditure to year end to minimise the forecast funding deficit.

Farm Environment Awards Evening

I attended the Farm Environment awards evening on 26 April 2007. It was a great evening that show cased some interesting and very well managed properties in the evening. It certainly helped me understand better the link between this Council's work, and both large and small property holders in the region.

AHB Issues

I am putting a lot of time and energy into Council's future involvement in the Bovine TB control programme in the Region. The Chief Executive and I recently met with senior management from the Animal Health Board to discuss renewal of the vector management contract post June 2008, and our continued involvement in vector control work.

Staffing

Recent staff changes in the Division include:

- Andrew Patrick commenced in April as a Land Management Officer.
- Dave Bayley, Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants) resigned at the end of March. Dave is moving to the sunnier climate of Australia.
- Cielle Stephens left the Monitoring & Investigations team of the Biosecurity Department to travel overseas.

You will see from the Land Management report that we recently made the appointment to replacement Peter Cameron in the Akura Conservation Centre.

Communications - Catriona Robertson

Since the last Committee meeting key communications activities for the Division have focussed on communications planning and media work for the Mangaroa/Kaitoke and Akatarawa winter possum control operations. Information brochures for each operation, several fact sheets and new signage have been produced and distributed. Media work for both operations will be ongoing over the next few months. Communications work for the Otaki possum control operation began late April.

There has been region-wide media coverage leading up to the Papawai Stream Care Group field day on 24 March and the 2007 Ballance Farm Environment Awards held on 26 April.

I'm now back working on the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy which will be priority to progress over the next few weeks. I'm also working on the next edition of Rural Services Newsletter due for publication in June and involved in several stories for the June edition of Elements – Peter Cameron retirement/Akura opening, winter possum control across the region, Ballance Farm Environment Awards and pest plants.

4.2 Environment Management – Nigel Corry

Regional Policy Statement Review

Councillors and appointed members are aware of the significant amount of work that has been invested in the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) review to date. All draft provisions have now been discussed as part of the series of workshops with Councillors and appointed members held over the last 6 weeks. We have also held a workshop with the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) Committee, and given presentations to the Chief Executives Group of the WRS, and the Land Transport Committee over this time. We are continuing to work on those provisions where we received strong Councillor feedback such as in relation to heritage, public access and some of the iwi provisions.

Ministry for the Environment (MfE) Survey on Local Authority - Performance under the Resource Management Act (RMA)

Members will be aware of the release in early April of the latest MfE survey on local authority performance. MfE carries out this survey of all local authorities every two years, with questions relating to a variety of resource management areas including the numbers and type of consents processed and monitored, the time taken to process them, enforcement action undertaken, and the level of commitment by local authorities to good practice.

Regional Councils, in general, came out of the report favourably, and Greater Wellington performed very well both in terms of processing consents within timeframes, and adopting good practice procedures. In relation to processing timeframes, Greater Wellington was reported as one of the best performing Regional Councils in the country with 97.42% of consents processed within timeframes, well above the regional council average of 86%.

Other key matters of interest show that over 50,000 consents were processed in New Zealand and of these, only 0.69% of all applications were declined. 73% of all applications to local authorities, nationwide, were processed within statutory timeframes.

Resource Management Charging Policy Review

We are currently in the process of seeking formal public comment on the review of our Resource Management Charging Policy. The policy was adopted in 1997 and last revised in 2001. It forms the basis for determining charges under the Resource Management Act. We have held our hourly charge-out rate for processing consents and undertaking compliance since 2001, and as part of this review are recommending this rate increase from the current \$70 to \$85.

Other key changes relate to our present policy on incident inspection as a formal part of the Charging Policy, incorporating any future reviews of the policy into our annual planning process, and amending some application fees to more accurately reflect the cost of processing certain types of consent. We are also recommending amendment to the State of the Environment (SOE) charges for discharge to land permits, groundwater take permits and surface water take

permits so as to more accurately reflect the increased monitoring required for “stressed” local environments. While most consent holders will receive an increased charge because of the updated charge-out rate, for some, that increase will be offset by a reduced SOE charge.

Consultation on the proposed Charging Policy closes on 21 May, and hearings will be held on 7 June.

4.3 Water Supply, Parks & Forests – Murray Kennedy

Reserve Forests

Wind Energy

During the period there has been media comment about the proposed wind farm in the Puketiro Forest, near Pauatahanui, and the possibility of the Council having to pay up to \$1.5M to the government. This is a possible outcome under one of the four options that were consulted on for changing land use from forestry to another purpose.

This situation does not apply to a possible wind farm at Stoney Creek as the trees were planted after 1990. Tender documents for a development have been sent out and tenders close in June.

Tauanui

Investigations into how to cross the Tauanui River are continuing. A difficult issue as the cost of gaining access has to relate to the value of 70 hectares of trees to be harvested.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4: