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Report 01.330

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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
from Councillor Robert Shaw and Councillor Christopher Laidlaw

Water Services Integration Consultation

1. Purpose

To formally present to the Council the report of the panel appointed for the consultation on water integration.

2. Background

Public consultation on the water services integration proposal began on 23 March 2001. Public meetings were held at three locations to discuss the integration proposal, in Porirua on 17 April, Lower Hutt on 18 April and Wellington on 19 April 2001.

Upper Hutt City were approached with regard to holding a public meeting there, but did not indicate that they wished to have such a meeting held.

2.1 Oral submissions

Meetings to present oral submissions before a joint panel from the three councils were held on 9 May at Hutt City Council, 10 May at Wellington City Council and an iwi hearing was held at the Wellington Regional Council on 11 May 2001.

2.2 Written submissions

Some 142 written submissions were received.

Half the submissions (71) were from individuals or organisations with a Wellington City association. 54 were similarly from Lower Hutt. There were just two submissions from Porirua City and three from Upper Hutt – including the respective councils. Two were from outside the metropolitan area and 10 should not be associated with any particular regional location – for example, government ministries.

3 Comment

The attached report has been agreed by the councillors from the Wellington Regional Council, the Hutt City Council and the Wellington City Council. The Panel agreed that we would each submit our own more specific reports to our own Councils, perhaps incorporating relevant recommendations. The Panel confirmed its endorsement of the report as a fair and accurate record of the public consultation process and of what was read and heard.

In essence, the public sees merit in there being one elected authority responsible for water in the Wellington region, and many oppose the imposition of a Trust. There was some discussion in the drafting of the report, as to whether or not some variation of the Trust model might in the end be found to be acceptable and there is clearly a disposition notably in Wellington City Council to explore this concept in more depth.

The recommendation of the panel hearing the public submissions is that the Councils continue to collectively explore the issue with a view to finding a satisfactory model for integration, and this provides us with some 'breathing space' and scope to work towards a more inclusive approach.

4 Recommendations

(1) That the Policy and Finance Committee:

- (a) Notes that the Wellington Regional Council (WRC) in conjunction with Hutt City Council (HCC) and the Wellington City Council (WCC) asked officers to develop a proposal to integrate the water businesses of WRC, HCC and WCC.*
- (b) Notes that the officers' proposal (which was to establish a Trust) was received by the three Councils and together they consulted with the public on that proposal*
- (c) Receives and notes:*
 - (i) The report of the Councillors' who heard the public submissions;*
 - (ii) The further work of officers on the Trust proposal*
- (d) Notes the high level of co-operation between the three Councils and the competence of the officers who produced the best possible proposal under the circumstances.*
- (e) Agrees that any Trust as proposed be no longer pursued because it is strongly opposed by the public and has significant deficiencies.*
- (f) Agrees that any further work on integration should involve all five Councils in the Wellington region.*
- (g) Agrees that the Chairperson write to the Minister of Local Government and Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ);*

- (i) *Providing a full account of efforts to integrate the Wellington water businesses; and*
- (ii) *Noting that a form of water integration acceptable to the community would likely require a change to governing legislation.*

ROBERT SHAW
Councillor

CHRISTOPHER LAIDLAW
Councillor