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Committee
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Response to Consultation on the Long-Term Council Community Plan

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the submissions received on the Long-Term Council Community Plan.

2. Background

The consultation period on the Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) ran from 17 April to 19 May 2003. Submissions received after that date have been accepted. A total of three hundred and forty-three (343) submissions is being circulated to councillors for consideration. Some forty-three (43) submitters have asked to be heard. These numbers are much greater than is normal for this Council, but it is not surprising that there are so many, given our new approach. The big question councillors need to focus on through the Sub-Committee meetings and the full Committee and Council meetings of 16 and 30 June is “Are there changes we should be making to our plan as a result of the views expressed?”

There is a range of other questions that may need to be considered also – relating mainly to our longer-term direction – but such questions are less urgent.

3. Comment

A new approach to Council planning and consultation was introduced by the 2002 Local Government Act. As councillors are aware, that approach emphasised consideration of the outcomes to be achieved and the need for councils to promote well-being in their communities. The Act has introduced the requirement for councils to distribute, as widely as possible, a summary of their plan in a form that would be accessible to the wider public. As a result, we have a great many submissions focussing on what we are trying to achieve and relatively few on particular projects.

4. General Support for the Overall Direction

The Council should be very pleased that its overall direction of moving towards greater sustainability has received such strong support. A small number of submissions (five) suggest that the Council has too much emphasis on environmental concerns, but slightly more (eight) comment that it does not go far enough towards true sustainability. Overall, as would be expected given the research carried out by this and other councils, it would appear that the position taken by the Council is in keeping with the views of the wider community.

5. Transport Received the Most Comment

Not surprisingly, given its size in our budget and the continuing prominence of transport issues in the media, the Take 10 Element that generated most comment was Transport. Some seventy-seven (77) submissions encouraged the Council to do more for public transport (only three wanted less or no Council involvement), in particular, exhorting the Council to resolve the rail problem. Twenty-one (21) submissions wanted to see progress on road proposals, again with just two (2) against. It is noteworthy that many submitters backed both road and public transport improvements; very much as the Council does in its Regional Land Transport Strategy. Twenty-one (21) submissions wanted to see more done for cyclists and pedestrians.

6. Energy was Prominent

With the consultation period coinciding with the latest power crisis, inevitably many submissions were received on the need for more energy production through wind-power (fifty (50) submissions) and renewable energy generally (eighteen (18)). Whilst the Council has recently taken an initiative in this area, there is a case for considering if we have a further role.

7. Waste is a Concern

Some thirty-three (33) submissions concerned waste and related matters such as recycling and litter. Whilst no immediate change is likely to be needed in the plan, this level of concern suggests that we should look at how we can respond, in conjunction with the territorial authorities.

8. Worries over Rating Levels and Ability to Pay

Twenty-four (24) submitters specifically expressed concerns as to the overall level of rates and/or the ability of people on fixed incomes to pay increases above the rate of inflation. This is a matter that councillors always have to grapple with. On the one hand there is a desire among the wider community to progress - whether with flood protection, or transport or to enhance the environment. On the other hand, there is the worry in parts of the community of their ability to pay. The problem always highlights the nature of rates as a tax on property values, not necessarily related to income or benefits received.

9. Kapiti Water

As might be expected, there were quite a few submissions with respect to water supply on the Kapiti Coast. Some submitters clearly did not understand that this is not the role of this Council, but others did and, effectively, were asking for some intervention.

10. A Range of Comments on Other Take 10 Elements

Multiple comments were received on all of the Take 10 Elements. Many of them included useful ideas that can be considered and taken up over time, rather than needing a change to the plan now. Nine negative and three positive comments concerned the use of 1080. Thirteen comments related to concerns over odour from Taylor Preston in the Ngauranga Gorge.

11. Other Issues

A few comments were concerned that the Regional Council might be getting involved in areas that duplicate the role of other agencies. Others encouraged the Council to do so.

Both the Hutt and the Upper Hutt City Councils have asked that Greater Wellington should support Positively Wellington Business (the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency). The Council might wish to reconsider its \$350,000 per annum allocation that was in previous plans (but never taken up), but was omitted this year.

The positive comments from the councils on working together more (for example on community outcomes) should be welcomed.

12. Targets

A number of comments concerned our targets and the lack of baselines. I agree that this is an area that we should work on. In some cases, additional detail may be available for the final plans. In other cases refinement will happen progressively.

13. Submissions on the Policies

A small number of the submitters addressed the policies that are being consulted on in conjunction with the LTCCP. Officers are working through these ideas and will produce some wording changes for the meeting of the full committee.

14. Conclusion

Councillors will form their own views on how the Council should respond to the submissions in terms of any changes to the LTCCP. You may care to consider that this was a consultation on the long-term (ten-year) plan. Accordingly, the Council may progressively take on board the direction sought over time, incorporating some of the changes suggested in later years.

Naturally with the style of consultation document we put out, most submissions were concerned with what we are trying to achieve rather than the detail of how we get there. I believe this is entirely appropriate. The community should tell us what result they want. The Council then determines how best to get there.

15. Recommendation

That the Sub-Committee:

Receives the report and notes the information.

Report prepared by:

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