



Report **06.34**
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Committee **Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee**
Author **John Morrison, Engineering Consultancy Manager**

Pandemic Response Preparedness Status Report

1. Purpose

To advise the Committee of the status of business continuity pandemic response planning in Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). The report does not cover planning being carried out by Civil Defence Emergency Management.

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

Because of the perceived likelihood of the current avian influenza situation developing into a human influenza pandemic, a pandemic response preparedness group has been established. This group comprises representatives of the various Council divisions, as well as other co-opted members.

Under section 64(2) of the *Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002* a local authority must ensure that it is able to function to the fullest possible extent, even though this may be at a reduced level, during or after an emergency.

4. Actions taken to date

Planning work to date has been based on information that has been provided from Central Government and other agencies, in particular the Pandemic Planning Information Kit released by the Ministry of Economic Development *Planning Guide for Infrastructure Providers*, which applies to GWRC activities.

Specific actions that have been taken are as follows:

- An influenza manager has been appointed for Wellington and recently another appointment has been made to cover the Wairarapa office.

The influenza manager is responsible for setting up the system to monitor staff members who become ill, to facilitate the return of staff to work once they become better, and to ensure that there are adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and hand hygiene products. It is a critical position.

- A medical advisor has been retained and has provided advice on some issues.
- Personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves and hand wash, has been purchased and stockpiled.
- Additional cleaning materials for the office and depots have been purchased and stockpiled.
- Key functions have been identified. This assessment has expanded the schedule contained in the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and is to be refined further.
- Key staff and backup personnel who could be given a changed role have been identified.
- Information has been gained for all staff relating to home email addresses and personal responsibility for childcare should schools be closed. This information will feed into the backup arrangements.
- An assessment has been carried out on the technological issues that will need to be worked through to enable staff to work from home with access to the GWRC computer system.
- A special web site has been set up to allow direct contact to staff who may be at home, as well as allowing those staff members to post notices on the web site. User names and passwords will be issued when it becomes apparent that the crisis is imminent.
- Additional supplies of essential chemicals for water treatment plants have been arranged.
- Preliminary arrangements for social distancing have been put in hand. The purpose of this is to reduce the density of staff at workplaces and to minimise close contact through meetings.
- Promotion of good hygiene practices. Plans are in hand for an internal campaign in March to promote good hygiene practices. This is a key factor in preventing the spread of influenza and will tie in with information that will be released to the general public by the Ministry of Health.

5. Future actions

The impetus built up for this project must be maintained, to ensure that planning is carried out to the stage where management and staff understand and are confident about the arrangements that have been made.

A pandemic guide for New Zealand local authorities is now under preparation. A draft has already been provided. The actions taken to date are in accordance with the overall context of that draft document.

6. Conclusion

Good progress has been made to date but there is more to be done to ensure that GWRC can fulfil its obligations by being able to operate through any emergency situation to the highest level possible, as well as providing leadership in the regional community.

7. Communication

No special press release is proposed.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receive** the report.
2. **Note** the contents of the report.

Report prepared by:

John Morrison
Engineering Consultancy Manager
Convenor, Pandemic Response Preparedness Group

Report approved by:

Jane Bradbury
Divisional Manager,
Corporate and Strategy