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Committee Council  
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## Draft Climate Change Strategy

### 1. Purpose

To approve the draft Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) Climate Change Strategy and agree to seek public feedback in early 2015.

### 2. Background

Climate change is a major environmental challenge, the effects of which also carry significant economic and social implications for councils and communities, with increased risks to settlements, infrastructure and ecosystems from rising seas, storms and flooding. As a coastal region, hemmed in to the east, west and south by the sea, the impact of even a small rise in sea level will be significant and expensive for some landowners across the greater Wellington region. Storms occurring on top of a higher sea level will affect public infrastructure such as transport networks, as well as private homes and other buildings. In some flood-prone areas, reliance on increased protection alone will become progressively less feasible.

While local government faces a number of challenges in responding to climate change, there is strong and growing recognition both internationally and within New Zealand, of the crucial role that councils can play in increasing climate resilience. This encapsulates both emission reductions and preparing for climate change impacts.

The draft Climate Change Strategy has been developed with input and guidance from staff across GWRC and interested stakeholders in the wider community. The draft Climate Change Strategy is included in **Attachment 1**.

The rationale for developing a Climate Change Strategy is to have a clear vision and objectives for improving climate resilience in our work across the region. It brings together in one overarching plan, existing and new climate change actions across GWRC's work programmes.

### 3. Draft Climate Change Strategy

The draft Climate Change Strategy is a non-statutory document that is designed to fit with and complement key statutory documents such as the draft Natural Resources Plan, Regional Policy Statement, Long Term Plan and Regional Land Transport Plan, and non-statutory documents such as floodplain management plans and Greater Wellington's Corporate Sustainability Action Plan. It takes a long term view but contains actions to be completed in the short-term. The draft Strategy articulates a vision for GWRC to:

*Strengthen the long-term resilience of the Wellington region through climate change action and awareness.*

This vision is to be achieved through policies and actions stemming from three core objectives. Together the objectives span the range of areas that Greater Wellington will focus on to achieve the vision of strengthening the region's long-term resilience to climate change: mitigation, adaptation, and awareness. They are:

Objective one: Mitigation- *Greater Wellington demonstrates a commitment to reducing GHG emissions across all its areas of influence, including its own operations, helping to create the conditions for a smart, innovative, low-carbon regional economy*

Objective two: Adaptation- *Risks from climate change-related impacts are managed and resilience is increased through consistent adaptation planning based on best scientific knowledge*

Objective three: Awareness- *Understanding of the causes of climate change is improved, and community awareness of impacts and implications for the Wellington region is increased*

Key actions for each of the three objectives are identified in the draft Strategy. Progress on these actions will be measured and reported on and it is proposed that actions will be reviewed and updated on a three-yearly basis.

### 4. Engagement

GWRC sought community input into the development of the draft Climate Change Strategy over a six week period from June 20<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup> 2014. The purpose of the engagement process was to allow an opportunity for people to contribute to the direction of the draft Strategy at a very early stage of development.

Following approval of the draft Climate Change Strategy, officers propose to seek community feedback on it in early 2015. As previously noted, the draft Climate Change Strategy is a non-statutory document to guide GWRC's planning and operational activities and ensure climate change is given consistent and appropriate consideration across all GWRC activities. Seeking public feedback on the draft Climate Change Strategy is recommended because:

- An overarching objective of the Strategy is to raise awareness of climate change issues in the region, which requires ongoing engagement with the community. Encouraging public participation throughout the development of the draft Strategy helps to raise the profile of the Strategy and fosters community support and ownership
- Providing opportunities for the community to engage with the draft Strategy will help improve general understanding of GWRC's roles and responsibilities in relation to climate change
- A number of organisations and individuals (including those that provided feedback during the initial public engagement period and those that did not) have requested an opportunity to comment on the draft Climate Change Strategy before it is finalised
- Implementing aspects of the draft Strategy (relating to both mitigation and adaptation) will require collaboration with other organisations, businesses and the community. The consultation phase presents an opportunity to enhance existing networks and develop new ones.

Similar to the initial public engagement process during the development of the Strategy, it is proposed that engagement on the draft Climate Change Strategy is publicised through a range of communications channels including:

- GWRC social media channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter
- A Bang the Table engagement page
- Emails to a wide range of stakeholders, including community groups and residents associations, iwi, central government agencies, GWRC suppliers and contractors, businesses and territorial authorities
- Press releases
- Radio advertising
- Articles in Our Region
- Possible radio interviews
- GWRC website

## **5. The decision-making process and significance**

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002. Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

## 5.1 Significance of the decision

Part 6 requires Greater Wellington Regional Council to consider the significance of the decision. The term ‘significance’ has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance and engagement policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance. This level of significance is recommended because the draft Climate Change Strategy is a non-statutory document, primarily intended to act as a guide for climate resilience activities across GWRC's responsibilities and operations.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Council:*

1. *Receives the draft Climate Change Strategy.*
2. *Approves the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy.*
3. *Agrees for the draft Climate Change Strategy to be released for public feedback in early 2015.*

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**Attachment 1: Draft Climate Change Strategy**