



Report **05.15**
Date 2 March 2005
File E/06/01/05

Committee **Council**
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Chairman's Report

With the confusion over special meetings and annual plan meetings and normal meetings, this is my first report since November. As a consequence, many of the issues and happenings may be a little dated, and Councillors will have already had considerable detail on many of the topics.

1. Wellington Regional Strategy

Work has commenced on this at a pace. A very successful two day forum, of members, plus a Regional Assembly attended by most Greater Wellington Councillors were held late last year. Further progress on finalising the information and research reports has been made. The next phase is to start putting together strategy options. The volume of background reports provides some very interesting reference material. I'm sure John Allard would be able to provide a copy to any Councillors wanting to peruse these.

On 28 February a workshop for what is called the "Strategic Partners" group comprising a significant cross-section of business leaders and public sector managers (Transit, Housing New Zealand, etc) was held. I attended as an observer from the WRS Forum and was impressed with the level of interest and engagement shown by this high powered group of participants. They provide a perspective that has not yet been evident in terms of what are the real drivers and constraints on regional economic growth. Their continued contribution will be invaluable to the process

2. Clean Streams

I joined the Chief Executive, Ministry for the Environment and Chairman of Fonterra in a helicopter trip to South Wairarapa and a public progress report on the Clean Streams Accord. All good stuff, but the crunch will come when the less willing farmers have to be brought into line on stream fencing, stock crossings, effluent disposal, nutrient budgeting, etc. It will be interesting to see how Fonterra handle non-compliance with the Accord as future milestone dates approach.

3. CentrePort

Most Councillors availed themselves of the opportunity to be briefed by CentrePort at the AGM. Some very aggressive future business development targets were presented based on expectations of pending decisions by the likes of Toll Rail, Fonterra, P & O Nedlloyd, etc. I have since met with the Chairman of CentrePort and set in train new reporting and briefing expectations for both the PIL board and Council.

4. Wellington Transport Package

This has been fully reported following release by Government in late January. This issue dominated my attention during the November/December period and I was very pleased to be able to present a positive regional response to the government package. There is still a lot of process to go through to achieve priority allocation for the new funds, plus the regional share of increased petrol tax. Quite a challenge ahead for the RLTC Chair!

Stage 2 of the package is consideration of a preferred solution for the Western Corridor. As Councillors are aware, this will occupy our attention in the April/May period as the region attempts to reach agreement based on the outcome of the Western Corridor Study. Two things are crystal clear to me. One is that the region will have to fully support a preferred scenario; the other is that this scenario has to be supported by the analysis presented in the Study. If both these are not in place by the end of May it is difficult to envisage Government allocating significant public funds to this Corridor in the foreseeable future.

5. Trolley buses

These have attracted some media attention in recent times. Greater Wellington Transport are preparing the business case for replacement of the fleet with modern trolley buses (low floor, etc) and upgrading the above-street infrastructure that has a number of deferred maintenance issues. The case will be made, we will advocate, Wellington City Council will support and Land Transport New Zealand will decide. Watch this space in March.

6. Councillor tours

Two very informative tours have been held to date; one to Kapiti, the other to Landcare assets in Upper Hutt. For various reasons it was not possible for all Councillors to participate in these tours but for those who were able a greater understanding of various operating issues on the ground was achieved. I would urge all Councillors to give high priority to making the time available to participate on other tours in the Region as they come up.

7. Landcorp issues

I have separately advised Councillors of the direction discussions are taking concerning the future of Whareroa and Waitangirua farms, following earlier decisions by Council related to outright purchase options. Considerable public

interest in these lands is being expressed and it will be of considerable interest to us as to how Government will respond to this.

8. Regional Affairs Committee – February

Not a great deal of earth shattering importance (except for Tsunami) at this meeting but a solid working meeting non-the-less. Issues such as RMA amendments, Government initiatives looking at water management, possible central government policy and funding related to flood management, walking access review, representation reviews and the like were all discussed. Much of this has come through various Council committees and doesn't require further elaboration here. The group of Regional Chairs, most of whom are new to the job, is working well together on matters of importance across regional councils and at the interface with central government. I have included one short paper in the latest Councillors' Bulletin arising from a local government (Mayor of Hastings) involvement in post-Tsunami observation and lessons learned.

9. Representation Review Forum

I attended this Forum together with a number of Councillors. It was informative to hear the views of the Local Government Commission, particularly in relation to their narrow interpretation of the plus or minus ten percent population criteria. We have some significant challenges ahead of us when undertaking our representation review.

10. Leave of absence

Cr Sandra Greig has requested leave of absence from 24 April to 17 June 2005 for overseas travel. I recommended that this request be granted.

11. Recommendations

- (1) That the leave of absence request from Cr Greig be **granted**.*
- (2) That the report be **received**.*

Report prepared by:

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Chairman