

Report to the Environment Committee
from Jane Bradbury, Divisional Manager, Environment

Environment Division: Proposed Operating Plans 1999-2007

1. Purpose

To give an overview of the proposed Operating Plans for the Environment Division.

2. Overview

I am pleased to report that the proposed Operating Plans have been prepared in keeping with the Division's fiscal envelope specified in *Facing the Future*. The total rates required amount to \$5,441k – down on our 1998/99 budget by \$72k, a 1.3% reduction. The total Divisional operating budget is \$7.6m.

There are no major changes in the services we are providing. Although the Division is currently considering some changes in the future, these will more appropriately be raised during discussions on the next long-term financial strategy.

Nevertheless, there are some changes from last year's plans. These are outlined below:

(a) Emergency Management Department

Emergency management was previously the responsibility of the Resource Policy Department. Last year, it was separated out again and a new Emergency Management Department created. However, the function remained in the Resource Policy Operating Plan for 1998/99. For 1999/2000 we have developed a separate Operating Plan for the Emergency Management Department.

However, no adjustment has yet been made to the allocation of regional rates. This will be done after the Committee meetings.

Consequently, the Department presently shows a net funding shortfall of \$281k. This is offset to some extent by the Resource Policy Department's funding surplus of \$240k. The difference of \$41k has been included to cover the possible cost of re-locating the Beehive Communication Centre to Wellington City Council's Headquarters in Murphy St. I stress that such a move is only a possibility at this stage, but it was deemed prudent to make some funding allowance.

(b) **Resource Policy Department**

There are no major changes, except as discussed above. Although the 1998/9 Operating Plan provided for the development of the Regional Landscape Plan (which has since been set aside), the budget has been maintained to develop the guidelines as directed by the Hearings Committee. This change is one of approach - from a statutory to a non-regulatory regime.

(c) **Consents Management Department**

This Department has reduced its staffing by one giving a total of 12.5 full time equivalents (secretarial support is shared with the Resource Investigations Department). Additionally, as we expect a higher number of notified consents to be processed than previously anticipated, the revenue line has been increased by \$60k.

The reduction in staffing has been accommodated by increased efficiencies.

(d) **Resource Investigations Department**

The number of pollution calls we are receiving has increased dramatically – they doubled in the last six months – and so an extra staff member has been added to this Department to cope with the increased demand. On a Divisional basis, this is offset by the reduction of one staff member in the Consents Management Department.

In addition, the Moera gravel aquifer investigation programme has been given a higher priority. This involves sinking a deep bore into the Hutt artesian basin to gain a better understanding of the potential yield of the aquifer. The present reserve will be drawn down to fund this work, along with a contribution from the Utility Services Division.

(e) **Harbours**

There is very little change in this budget apart from re-allocations of expenditure after assessing staff time spent on various activities. The Manager's oft heard phrase "steady as she goes" is once again appropriate.

3. **Item not included**

There is one item which has not been included in this budget. The Committee may want to discuss this further.

As pointed out by Cr Buchanan at the last Policy and Finance Committee meeting, members of Ara Tahi, the Council's inter iwi consultative Committee, are strongly requesting increased resourcing and representation as part of a re-evaluation of the Council's relationship with iwi.

In the Division's current Operating Plans iwi have \$80k allocated to fund the following activities: comments on non-notified consents (\$41k and includes the Wairarapa Division); Ara Tahi (\$10k); and contracts for input into regional plans (\$29k). There is also the position of Resource Analyst (Iwi Liaison). Total budgeted expenditure is, therefore, \$200k, including overhead charges. Further, other Divisions of the Council encounter expenditure for iwi purposes.

At this time, the nature of the relationship between local government and iwi is not clear. Ara Tahi have signalled their discomfort with the present arrangements and the Council has agreed to re-visit the issue. This is certainly something that needs to be addressed during discussions on the Council's long-term financial strategy.

Meanwhile, I suggest that some budgetary provision be made for iwi and the Council to review the Charter of Understanding and for iwi to prepare iwi management plans. The Committee may like to recommend that \$100k be allocated for these purposes.

4. **Divisional Priorities for 1999-2000**

The Divisional Strategy and Direction includes our priorities for 1999/2000. We did this for the first time last year and found that it provided a focus for our work beyond the outputs specified in the Operating Plans. Consequently, this year we have repeated the exercise. I shall discuss these in more detail at the Committee meeting, but the priorities that we have developed for the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

- Implement the staff development programme
- Put more effort into influencing/building relationships with external individuals/organisations
- Progress the environment communication/education initiative
- Ensure that the Wairarapa and Environment Divisions are consistent in their resource management practices
- Ensure that the Regional Policy Statement is implemented
- Improve communication between the departments in the Division

- Ensure that all our information systems in the Division meet our needs and are integrated

5. **Recommendation**

- (1) *That this report be received and its contents noted.*
- (2) *That the following Operating Plans be approved in principle:*
 - *Resource Policy Department*
 - *Consents Management Department*
 - *Resource Investigations Department*
 - *Emergency Management Department*
 - *Harbours Department*
- (3) *That the proposed Operating Plans for the above activities be recommended to the Policy and Finance Committee for inclusion in the Council's proposed Long Term Financial Strategy 1997-2007:1999 Update (incorporating Council's 1999/2000 Annual Plan)*

Report prepared by:

JANE BRADBURY
Divisional Manager, Environment