



Report **04.476**
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Committee **Policy, Finance and Strategy and Council**
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Early processing of votes

1. Purpose

For the Committee to consider advice given to Greater Wellington and other local authorities by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) regarding the effect of recent amendments to the Local Electoral Act 2001 (“the Act”), and to seek a decision to allow territorial authorities in the Wellington region to process all voting documents received in respect of the 2004 triennial local authority elections (“the elections”) during the voting period.

2. Background

At its meeting on 30 October 2003, the committee considered report **03.623**, which dealt with various issues relating to the elections. The report stated that “[d]ecisions on the method of voting (i.e. postal or ballot box) and the early processing of votes can be made by territorial authorities but not a regional council.”

Following recent amendments to the Act on 7 July 2004, and advice received from DIA (**attachment 1** to this report), it seems that this statement is no longer true in respect of early processing. That is, the processing of votes during the voting period - 17 September to 9 October 2004.

3. Comment

DIA has advised that the Council must resolve to allow the processing of votes during the voting period in order for territorial authorities in the region to carry out early processing of votes for regional council candidates. Electoral officers in the region have indicated that territorial authorities wish to carry out early processing of all votes, whether for regional council candidates or otherwise.

In fact, territorial authority electoral officers have indicated that a decision on the part of this Council not to allow early process of regional council votes would prejudice their ability to print, distribute and process all votes. This is because it would be necessary to print and distribute a regional council voting paper separately from that of territorial authorities and district health boards. In

addition to the added cost associated with doing this, there is concern that it would not be practically possible to print and distribute these new voting papers given the time available and the number of suppliers capable of doing the work. For this reason, it is recommended that the Council resolve to allow the early processing of votes.

4. Communication

As soon as practicable after the close of nominations on 20 August 2004, the Electoral Officer is required by section 64 of the Act to give public notice of the election on 9 October 2004. Among other things, the notice must state whether a resolution has been made that voting documents are to be processed during voting period.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***recommend*** to Council that the voting documents received by constituent territorial authorities in the Wellington region in respect of the 2004 triennial local authority elections be processed during the voting period.
2. ***note*** that, pursuant to section 65(2a) of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Electoral Officer must give public notice that voting documents will be processed during the voting period.

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1: Department of Internal Affairs – Request for Information