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Committee **Council**
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Chairman's Report

1. Regional Park

The most important event of the month has been the Councillors' visit to our newest regional park (well, proposed anyway). It is obvious that a great deal of work is required over the next year or so before a decision on the reality of this proposal can be made. I hope Councillors that attended have a good appreciation of the scale of the place, the scale of the short, medium and long-term issues, and a sense of the potential of the area as an ecological park. I certainly enjoyed escorting Councillors around this part of the Wairarapa and extend my thanks to all of the staff involved in organising and leading the tour.

2. Wairarapa issues

Still with Wairarapa issues, on 15 March Cr Long and myself, together with the Chief Executive and Divisional Manager, Catchment Management, attended the biannual joint Wairarapa Councils' meeting. This is a very useful forum for interchange between councils on a range of mutual issues. As has become usual, Greater Wellington gave an update on transport issues relevant to the Wairarapa and contributed on a range of local issues. Thank you to Cr Long for his chairmanship of the meeting as it was Greater Wellington's turn to host the gathering.

3. ARC visit

Thank you to all Councillors who were able to participate at some stage in the visit from ARC. Their Councillors were immensely impressed with the biosecurity programme, particularly the KNE work and urban Wellington pest management, and of course the visitors had no idea of the scale of our river management programmes. Thanks to Crs Long, Evans and Glensor for contributing their debating expertise during what was a very pleasant evening. After the discussion session on day 2, Mike Lee on behalf of ARC stated that they felt this to be the best and most productive visit they had made. My thanks to all of the officers involved in assisting with this.

4. Wellington Regional Strategy

A great deal of work from a variety of sources is now underway to bring together the strategic elements of the WRS. The first cut of a draft strategy is due around the end of May. A full forum workshop was held on 30 March and another is programmed for 3 May. I was unable to make the 30 March workshop due to LGNZ commitments but understand that after a somewhat rocky start, which now seems to be the norm for these workshops, very good progress was made on bringing together focus areas and starting to settle on strategic directions. I expect Greater Wellington will have a look at the draft in a workshop in early June to provide initial feedback to the preparation of the final draft consultation document due in late June.

In the meantime, some initiatives are being taken on developing some “quick wins” in economic development. One of these is focussing on convincing an airline into establishing a long haul (South Asia) service out of Wellington using new generation aircraft capable of reaching Asian destinations from Wellington Airport with its existing runway. This is being headed by Positively Wellington Tourism and Wellington Airport Ltd. Resources to promote this are being sought from Territorial Authorities and the private sector.

5. Regional Transport

Considerable effort from a number of people has gone into translating the Western Corridor hearings findings into a draft Western Corridor Plan for the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS). Alongside this is a comprehensive proposed regional transport programme has been prepared and this was the subject of our workshop on 31 March. Dave Benham and I visited all of the Region’s Mayors to discuss the drafts of these papers and also meet with Land Transport New Zealand and Transit’s Chief Executives. Cr McDavitt spoke with the interest group appointees to the Regional Land Transport Committee (RLTC). At the 11 April meeting, the RLTC adopted the Western Corridor Plan and referred it to Greater Wellington for inclusion in the RLTS. A number of related matters were covered in resolutions coming from Wellington City. These are all provided in RLTC reports to Council. At the same time, RLTC received the Proposed Regional Transport Programme and referred this to the RLTS review process. Overall, members expressed satisfaction with the direction the proposed programme is taking and considered it a good starting point for the development of a final draft for consultation as part of the review, and for input to next year’s National Land Transport Programme. Congratulations to Terry McDavitt and his committee for getting these important milestones in place.

6. National Pest Management Strategies

On 4 April Council Chairs from Environment Waikato, Horizons, Greater Wellington and Environment Canterbury met with the Minister of Agriculture and Biosecurity, Jim Anderton. The purpose was to discuss Animal Health Board funding/budgeting issues, possum control post Bovine Tb strategy and crown funding of Regional Strategies. The discussion was quite wide ranging

and informative. I will be taking a proposal to Regional Affairs Committee (RAC) to establish an on-going sub-committee to engage at a political level with Central Government to address key issues related to the above matters. This will ensure that Chief Executive and technical based solutions can be translated through political resourcing decisions into actions. This is an example of a national strategic issue that has long-term implications for regional councils the RAC can usefully contribute to at Central Government level.

7. Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ)

I attended a National Council meeting on 16 March and a Central/Local Government Forum on 30 March. The National Council meeting was largely devoted to governance matters such as work programme and budget, progress reports on various LGNZ projects and initiatives and preparation for the Forum.

The Forum itself was an interesting experience, as it was my first as a member of the National Council. All of the senior Cabinet Ministers that interface with local government were present, and the meeting was jointly chaired by the Prime Minister and LGNZ Chairman. I found the process rather interesting as it was largely the presentation of set pieces from LGNZ (prepared by staff) to which the appropriate Minister responded. I had been allocated two opportunities to speak, one on catchment management/water programme and the other on infrastructure funding. This was probably two too many for some of my mayoral colleagues who don't see regional councils as having that degree of importance in the scheme of things. I also don't perform that well to scripts sometimes and did enter into what I thought was a good interchange over National Policy Statements and integrated catchment management. I quickly found out at morning tea that not sticking to the script set by LGNZ staff was a bit out of line. Odd that!

Issues covered also included waste minimisation funding, drinking water standards, pandemic, regional growth, transport and RMA. All in all, this was broad ranging but tightly controlled interaction.

8. Local Government New Zealand Conference

Conference 2006 is being held in Wellington from 17-19 July. For regional council participants this is preceded by a regional tour on Saturday/Sunday (15 and 16 July). We will be hosting this tour with Horizons. Registrations for the conference are due shortly so we need to decide attendees. This has usually been the Chairman and 2 councillors but as it is Wellington, perhaps we should consider the Chairman and 3 councillors. We need more nominations.

9. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Receives the report.*

2. ***Nominate** three Councillors to attend the LGNZ Conference 2006 along with the Chairman.*

Report prepared by:

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Chairman