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Committee Policy, Finance and Strategy  
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## **Fire and rescue services re-organisation submission**

### **1. Purpose**

To provide a draft submission and recommendations on the framework for New Zealand's fire and rescue services and their funding.

### **2. Significance of the decision**

The matters for decision in this report does not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### **3. Background**

In April this year, the Department of Internal Affairs published a consultation document for new fire legislation. This is to be a framework for New Zealand's fire and rescue services and their funding.

At present, there are both volunteer and paid fire forces in New Zealand. There is also a distinction between urban and rural fire fighting.

Over the years, the existing fire service has attended more and more motor vehicle accidents and assisted with the rescue of persons from the vehicles, even though there may not have been a vehicle fire. One of the changes is to recognise this contribution.

It is noted in the consultation document that at the heart of the system would be a strong national service where overall responsibility for the delivery of fire services throughout New Zealand, and that would provide an important first response to many rescues. This national service would build on an increasingly utilised strong links with civil defence emergency management. Responsibility for the management of vegetation fires would evolve to meet the needs of local communities and the country as a whole. Fire authorities that want to, would be able to continue with their present rural functions. However, a fire authority would be able to pass this responsibility to the national service.

The proposal is to repeal existing fire legislation. A new Act of parliament would establish the new fire and rescue service.

## 4. Comment

As the Greater Wellington Regional Council is not a fire authority under the Rural Fires Act at present, it does not have a legal requirement to provide a first response under the Act. It is expected that this would be the same situation under a new Act.

With the Council owning or controlling some 50,000 hectares of farm, park, plantation and natural forest land, it is essential that there are adequate resources for fighting rural fires. This aspect is covered in the draft submission, **Attachment 1**.

Under the proposal, the source of levy funds for fire and rescue services would be much wider than at present. For example, plant and machinery would be included whereas at present, it may only be the building housing the plant and machinery. This would impact on the Council water treatment plants. It is recognised though that there will be changes in the levy rates because of the wider funding base.

In the attached submission, it is suggested that the levy obtained from motor vehicle owners should be through the vehicle registration process rather than through third party insurance. Local Government New Zealand, in its submission, has taken a similar approach.

The proposal is that there will be a review of property currently exempt from paying a fire service levy. At present, there are 21 exemptions. While it may be appropriate to review whether “hay or other cut crops insured in an open field” should continue as an exempt category, there are a number of exempt infrastructure assets of the type owned by the Council. These include “a tunnel or cutting, dam, drain or channel, reservoir or water tank, and water reticulation pipes”. Hence, the request in the draft submission that there should be full consultation on any changes to the exempt schedule.

## 5. Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the contents.***
3. ***Endorses the draft submission (Attachment 1).***

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**Attachment 1:** Draft submission