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Committee Civil Defence Emergency Management Group
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Regional CDEM Emergency Operations Centre

1. Purpose

To obtain approval to investigate a location for a new Regional CDEM Emergency Operations Centre and offices.

2. Background

For sometime Greater Wellington (GW) has been investigating the location of an alternative Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

In 1991 an area was made available to the Wellington Regional Council in the basement of the executive wing at parliament (the 'Beehive') for an EOC. Use of this area continued until 2002 when GW was requested to vacate the space so that it could become part of the National Crisis Management Centre. Several options were looked at for a new EOC location. The Regional Council Centre in Wakefield Street Wellington was chosen but it was understood it was not ideal.

3. Deficiencies of the Existing EOC

Continuing work by GW over the last few years has confirmed that an EOC in the Regional Council Centre is less than ideal in a major seismic event. However, for other types of events such as flooding, it is still satisfactory.

A series of tsunami inundation maps have been prepared for the Wellington area. The part of Wakefield Street where the Regional Council Centre is situated is on the junction between the red and orange tsunami evacuation zones.

Regional maps have also been prepared to indicate likely liquefaction zones. Liquefaction is expected in the land surrounding the Regional Council Centre during a large earthquake. Potentially, access will be quite difficult following such an event.

Last year, GW commissioned a seismic review of its Regional Council Centre. Preliminary analysis shows that although the building overall does not meet the statutory definition of an earthquake prone building, its actual strength is not far above the cut-off point. While further investigation work is continuing, the ability to use the building as an EOC following a major earthquake is unlikely.

In addition, the Canterbury seismic events in September 2010 and particularly February 2011 indicate that several hundred people are involved. The February 2011 response saw people working out of the Christchurch Arts Centre, which is a modern building. It would not be practical for several hundred people to operate out of an EOC at the Regional Council Centre.

In summary, the Regional EOC has a number of deficiencies and hence the need to investigate an alternative location. While temporary locations might be available following a major event, any of the potential places in the CBD are likely to have the same deficiencies as the current EOC in relation to liquefaction and tsunami and consequently the ability of people to gain access.

4. Massey University Proposal

Massey University has a significant postgraduate programme focussed on emergency management. This involves education and research with the latter involving other institutions in the region, for example GNS Science. Some time ago, Massey University approached GW about the concept of developing a multipurpose emergency management hub on its Wellington campus. Within the last few months, the concept has been developed into a proposal for a building that could house regional emergency management staff and act as an EOC. In a major incident, when several hundred people may be required, the university would make other space in modern buildings available. Following such an event the University is likely to be closed for its normal teaching and research purposes.

Further detail about the proposal will be made in a presentation by the University to the CDEM Group.

5. Comment

The University proposal overcomes the identified deficiencies with the current GW EOC. It would be a modern structure able to withstand a severe earthquake. Site liquefaction is not an issue as it is understood the building would be founded on weathered greywacke rock. Elevation of the site takes it out of the tsunami zone.

In addition to housing the EOC, regional CDEM staff could be located there in dedicated offices. The actual emergency room may also be used in “peace time” by Massey University as part of its emergency management education programme but would be purpose designed primarily as an emergency centre.

Although the proposal is still at a preliminary stage, overall appears to be promising.

As the building would be on University land, it is expected that the space required for an EOC and offices would be leased.

The next step is for Massey University to develop the proposal in conjunction with the newly appointed Regional Manager CDEM Wellington, Mr Bruce Pepperell and GW staff.

This can then be considered as part of the structure and facilities report for the regional emergency management group that Mr Pepperell is preparing over the next few months.

6. Recommendations

That the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group:

1. ***Receives** the report and notes its contents.*
2. ***Requests** the Regional Manager CDEM Wellington to consider the Massey University option as part of his report for the regional emergency management group.*

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