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

**Environment Division: Proposed Operating Plans 2001-2010**

**1. Purpose**

To provide an overview of the Proposed Operating Plans for the Environment Division.

**2. Overview**

I am pleased to report that the Proposed Operating Plans provide for a saving in total funds required of \$281,000, compared with the budget for the year 2001/2002 in the Council's Long Term Financial Strategy, *Investing in the Future*.

These savings have been made without materially affecting the planned services or outputs. It comprises a reduction of \$81,000 in operating expenses and \$200,000 in legal reserves.

To accommodate changing circumstances and a more up-to-date understanding of resource requirements, the following changes have been made to the Operating Plans for the year 2001/2:

- **Environment Co-ordination**

This Department's costs have been maintained at the predicted level. However, personnel costs have increased \$28,000 to provide for an extra permanent part-time staff member for the environmental education work. The workload for the schools *Learnwell* programme is greater than envisaged and judged to be on-going. In particular, planning and delivering the environmental trail, including the school resource material for use before and after the trail visit, is proving to be very resource intensive. To deliver the programme to a reasonable cross section of schools is a personnel intensive task. If the trail proves to be the success that the pilot studies are suggesting, then it is likely that we will have to do a complete review of our staffing for this area of the Council's work.

To accommodate this increase in personnel, the budget for other areas, particularly the mobile classroom has been reduced accordingly. We are confident that we can achieve the intended outputs with this reallocation.

- **Resource Policy**

Total funds required have been reduced by \$83,000. Consultants' costs have also been reduced by \$66,000 in the plan implementation area. Savings have been made because the allocation for landscape guidelines is no longer required and, in our opinion, we over-estimated the need for consultants in this area of work.

A staff member has been cut after a review of the way in which GIS services are delivered within the Council.

These reductions have, in a very small way, been offset by an increase in the budget for environmental reporting (\$28,000). I have not been happy with the way in which we are getting our environment information across to the public and I am determined that we will be far more effective in this area in the future.

Finally, our internal consultants' costs have been reduced because of a change in the way that the ArcInfo licence charges are apportioned within the Council.

One area that the Committee may like to look at is the iwi budget. Last year a sum of \$300,000 per annum was added to the budget for iwi consultancy. This year to date we have only used \$10,000. We appear to have both over-estimated the demand for iwi project money and under-estimated the time required to get projects off the ground. Nevertheless, it is possible that we are in a transition period. Indeed, there are signs that iwi and the Council are working better together to identify projects which iwi can undertake. However, given that this Council has committed itself to improving its relationship with iwi, it may be pragmatic at this stage to leave the budget intact so providing iwi with a longer timeframe to organise work.

- **Consents Management**

This Department has reduced funds required by \$32,000.

Personnel costs have increased by \$20,000 because the Division's word-processing operator position has been transferred from the Environment support area to this Department. In addition, provision has been made for a permanent part-time secretary position. In the current financial year this position is temporary and unbudgeted. The administrative workload in the Department has become excessive for staff, particularly when we are spending more and more time on compliance issues. Although staff will still be responsible for the bulk of the administration involved in managing resource consents, this extra help has increased efficiencies.

Savings have been made mainly in the external consultant's costs (\$37,000). This is because the new database is functioning well and is unlikely to need the upgrades that we anticipated.

External revenue in this Department consists entirely of resource charges. As the charging policy is under review, it is likely that the budget could change.

- **Resource Investigations**

Funds required for this area of work have been held at the level proposed.

There has been some fine-tuning of the budget. For example, an additional \$25,000 has been allowed for the *Business Bridges* pollution prevention work. Specifically, it is to develop a database for the environmental site audits.

However, savings have been made in our laboratory costs because the integrated monitoring strategy has rationalised the resources required.

One issue to note is that this budget includes a sum of \$150,000 to clean-up any Wellington Regional Council owned contaminated sites. As the work to identify these sites and clean-up requirements has not yet been completed this year, we are unsure whether or not this budget will be excess to requirements.

- **Harbours**

Funds required have decreased by \$10,000 because our experience from this year has shown that the temporary ranger costs are less than anticipated.

- **Emergency Management**

Funds have been kept at current levels with the exception of rent costs (an increase of \$34,000) which are discussed below.

- **Overheads**

Overheads have increased by \$22,000 for the Division, mainly because of the new Environment Co-ordination Department. The Department was not fully provided for in last years' costs.

- **Rents**

The Division's internal rent costs have increased by \$39,000, mainly as a result of the Incident Command Centre for the Emergency Management and Harbours Departments on Level 8.

- **Reserves**

At present we have a large reserve for legal purposes. This sum was to cover any potential legal costs involved in getting our regional plans through the statutory process. As all the plans are now operative, it is unlikely that we will need to utilise these funds. Consequently we have cut \$200,000 from the reserve.

- **Remaining Years to 2010**

Our projected budgets have been adjusted only very slightly. Essentially the expenditure line is flat throughout this period.

### 3. **Divisional Priorities**

The Divisional Management team develops these priorities on an annual basis when we update the Divisional Strategy and Direction. They are intended to cover the “how” of our work, rather than the “what” of the operating plans. For 2001/2 they are:

- Incorporate the principles of Local Agenda 21 into our work
- Try to make our work innovative and fun for the staff and community (don't be boring or bureaucratic).
- Provide accessible and appropriate information to the community so that we can motivate people to improve their environmental behaviour. This will include up-to-date, on-line information via the Council's web site.
- Maintain high work standards and be seen as leaders and influencers.
- Ensure that our health and safety practices and documentation are up to standard.
- Ensure that the Division's work practices are environmentally sound.

### 4. **Recommendations**

- (1) *That the report be received and the contents noted.*
- (2) *That the following proposed Operating Plans be approved in principle:*
  - *Environment Co-ordination Department*
  - *Resource Policy Department*
  - *Consents Management Department*
  - *Resource Investigations Department*
  - *Harbours Department*
  - *Emergency Management 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 2000-2010: 2001 Update (incorporating Council's 2001/2 Annual Plan.*

Report prepared by:

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