

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

16 MAY 2012

AGENDA ITEM C3

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL'S SURVEY OF RESIDENTS

Purpose of Report

To advise Council that Wellington City Council has invited all Councils in the Wellington Region to participate in a research project to ascertain the views of residents on reforming local government structures in the Wellington region.

Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Resolve to participate in the survey programme.*

1. Executive Summary

Wellington City Council is proposing to release a public discussion document seeking residents' views on the need for reform, and outlining four main options. South Wairarapa District Council has been invited to participate in the survey and to contribute proportionally to the costs.

2. Discussion

The Government's announcement on local government reform has resulted in most of the council's within the Wellington region undertaking consultation within their local communities. Wellington City Council wishes to release a public discussion document in the middle of May and would like to include all of the region's councils in the survey programme they are undertaking. There will be an opportunity for individual councils to include customised questions that are relevant to their specific area.

3. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Memorandum: Research into Views on Local Government Structures - Wellington

Contact Officer: Dr Jack Dowds, Chief Executive

**Appendix 1 – Memorandum:
Research into Views on
Local Government
Structures - Wellington**

Memorandum: Research into views on Local Government Structures – Wellington

Purpose

1. This paper provides you with information about research proposed to be undertaken by Wellington City Council into the views of residents on reforming local government structures in the Wellington region.
2. Wellington City Council would like to invite other councils to participate in this research process, both in terms of agreeing the methodology and contributing to costs on the same basis as the shard survey into regional amenities during 2011.

Background

3. Following the government's recent announcements on local government reform, most of the councils in the Wellington region have indicated an intention to consult on the idea of reform directly with their local communities. Wellington City Council is proposing to release a public discussion document in the middle of May, seeking residents' views on the need for reform, and outlining four reform options. A copy of this paper, which will be considered by our Councillors on 10 May, will be made available to you.

Proposal for a region-wide survey

4. Because it is important to our councillors to know where the public sits on the issue of governance reform, we are proposing to commission an independent research survey of residents' views on the need for reform and the four options, to run alongside the consultation exercise. This proved extremely useful and enlightening on the regional amenities work for Chief Executives, the Mayoral Forum and councillors across the region when considering that proposal.
5. We could undertake this research based solely on the views of Wellington City residents. However all four of the reform options in our discussion document have implications for both Wellington City residents and for residents across the region. For example, Option 2 involves Wellington City Council merging with Porirua and Kapiti into a unitary authority – our Councillors would like to know how the residents of Porirua and Kapiti respond to that idea, not just Wellington City residents. Also, given that the three councils would form a Unitary Authority, all of the other councils in the region would be affected by the removal of ratepayers from Wellington, Porirua and Kapiti from funding regional services.
6. I would like to see all councils therefore participating in this survey programme.

7. I am aiming to have a draft research proposal available to table at our meeting on Friday 4 May, prepared by Colmar Brunton which did the regional amenities research. The methodology would allow for a level of common questions to all surveyed residents across the region, but would also give room for each area to dig down into customised questions that you want answered for your area. As with the regional amenities research, we would look to weight the survey numbers towards areas with lower population levels to minimise the margin of error on the results.
8. The research proposal is scheduled to take about 6 weeks. I am keen to progress this research with relative speed, given that the government has signalled an intention to be open to reform proposals for the 2013 elections following the passing of legislation in September/October this year.

Cost

9. Initial estimates of the cost of this research are around \$60 – \$70k. If all councils decided to participate in the research but did not require the ability to differentiate questions in your area, the cost would be more in the realm of \$40k. Using the cost-allocation that we had for the regional amenities project, the following would be roughly the cost-share for a \$65k research project.
10. I understand that with each council undertaking its own processes not all councils may wish to join in. The actual share for each participating council can be discussed when we know who is on board:

TLA	% of Popn	Cost
Wellington	40%	\$26,000
Hutt	22%	\$14,300
Porirua	11%	\$7,150
Kapiti	10%	\$6,500
Upper Hutt	9%	\$5,850
Masterton	4%	\$2,600
South Wairarapa	2%	\$1,300
Carterton	2%	\$1,300
Total	100%	\$65,000

Next Steps

11. If you agree to would like to participate in the research, I propose that you indicate that to me by Friday 18 May, and send me any comments on changes that you would like to see made to the proposal. Your input to the survey proposal is welcomed, and we are conscious of keeping the total questionnaire to under ten minutes to ensure a robust volume of responses.

Recommendations

12. I recommend you:

- a) Indicate whether you are willing to support this research in principle, and whether you are willing to jointly fund this research with WCC.
- b) Advise a final response by Friday 18 May

Garry Poole
Chief Executive
Wellington City Council