

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Members, Engineering Services Committee
FROM: David Stephenson, Utilities Asset Engineer
DATE: 6 May 2009
SUBJECT: **COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO MFE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT:
WASTE MINIMISATION IN NEW ZEALAND**

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the committee to make a submission to the Ministry for the Environment, responding to the document "Waste Minimisation in New Zealand".

2 BACKGROUND

The Ministry for the Environment has released a discussion paper on waste management ("Waste Minimisation in New Zealand"). A copy of this document has been distributed to members of the committee.

The document follows the passing into law of the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 (WMA), and seeks submissions on a number of waste related issues.

The document was released in late March and discusses:

- Proposed amendments to the targets in the New Zealand Waste Strategy (NZWS).
- Identification of the first proposed "priority products" for product stewardship under the WMA.
- Proposed criteria for contestable fund applications from the Waste Minimisation Fund (funded by the landfill levy).
- Proposals for increased monitoring of waste.
- Proposed regulations for the operation of the landfill levy ("waste levy") from 1 July, particularly with respect to cover.

The discussion document invites feedback on the proposals, with submissions closing on Friday May 15. The proposals contained in the document are potentially significant for Council.

Engineering staff have prepared a draft submission (attached) for the committee's review and approval. Staff have also sought input from staff in environmental monitoring for areas of regional council responsibilities.

In addition staff have reviewed and provided feedback on a draft submission by Local Government New Zealand.

3 DISCUSSION

The proposals in the discussion document are significant, with potential to affect Council's operations over a long period of time. The following highlight particular areas of interest in Council's draft submission.

3.1 Part 1: Revising the targets for the New Zealand Waste Strategy

The Ministry is proposing a new set of 14 targets to replace the 30 targets in the New Zealand Waste Strategy (NZWS). These targets are important for Council because Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) must "have regard" to the NZWS.

The targets proposed in the discussion document are perhaps better defined as a mix of targets and actions. A shortcoming identified with some the targets is that they do not allocate responsibility for the target (or action). Further, because of a lack of robust data collected to date, many of the targets focus on data collection, with only one (Target 1) identifying a quantitative target for waste reduction.

Of particular interest to Council are the targets relating to product stewardship (Targets 7 & 8). After discussion with a wide range of other TA's officers, Council staff are of the opinion that these proposed targets are unambitious (three schemes in place by 2012 and a further two by 2014), may send the wrong signal to product manufacturers and result in a very modest reduction in landfill volumes.

Others targets to note are those that relate to contaminated sites (Targets 9 & 10) which will affect Council in its role as a regional council. These targets require significant progress in contaminated site identification and implementation of action plans for "high risk" sites.

3.2 Part 2: Proposed priority products for mandatory product stewardship

The Ministry has identified three products for further investigation to see if a mandatory product stewardship is warranted: waste oil, agricultural chemicals and refrigerant gases.

Council staff have two concerns around the proposed priority products: the emphasis on environmental harm, at the expense of waste reduction benefits of potential products; and the small number of products proposed for investigation. Council staff consider that the Ministry could propose a longer list of "products of concern" as well as actively investigating a shorter list of priority products.

Council consider the following products to be of highest importance:

- Agricultural chemicals
- Waste oil
- Tyres
- e-Waste
- Packaging (in particular, glass packaging).

Staff have not submitted in detail in this area, but are aware of a number of comprehensive submissions from other TA's on this matter.

3.3 Part 3: Identifying funding criteria for the Waste Minimisation Fund

The Waste Minimisation Fund is the contestable fund of waste levy monies that is available for waste minimisation projects. The first funding round is likely to open late this year and will be open to a wide range of applicants.

The Ministry has proposed a series of funding criteria for assessment of applications and the Council submission proposes a change to the criteria to set aside a portion of funding for applications from non-metropolitan centres. The rationale behind this submission is that there is a risk that if a “value per dollar” criterion is strictly applied then applications from urban centres may well be predominantly favoured, at the expense of those from smaller areas (such as Tasman).

3.4 Part 4: Monitoring waste in New Zealand

This section of the discussion document discusses proposed regulations for collection of data relating to waste and material diverted from landfill.

Council staff broadly support the proposals, which will provide opportunity for Council to benchmark its activities and to gain information on materials outside of the landfill waste stream.

3.5 Part 5: Improving the operation of the waste levy

The proposal discussed in this section of the document discusses proposed regulations to provide exemptions from levy payment for cover material brought to landfill sites.

Because cover material is sourced on site at Eves Valley, this proposal will not directly affect Council. Staff have however made a number of recommendations in the submission to identify potential unintended effects of the proposal.

4 RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Engineering Manager be given delegated authority to finalise and send a Council submission to the discussion document “Waste Minimisation in New Zealand”.

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