



CHAIR'S REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Michael Higgins, Environment & Planning Committee Chair

REFERENCE: S611

SUBJECT: **CHAIR'S REPORT – REPORT EP09/04/10** - Report prepared for meeting of 23 April 2009

It is a while since the Environment & Planning Committee has met. The Richmond West plan change hearing, and the LTCCP process have been given priority. The agenda for today reflects that and I am expecting a full day working through it.

The Richmond West hearing process has, in my opinion, been useful with many well considered matters raised. I am comfortable with the manner in which Council is considering the issues, and the process of working through them. Hopefully, our decisions will come together in the next round of discussion.

The LTCCP process appears to be proceeding well with no apparent difficulties arising for the E&P committee.

Advice has been received from the Minister for the Environment, Nick Smith that the Air Quality Standards are to be reviewed. In my opinion there is an inevitability that such a review must occur because the time line for compliance and the implications for non compliance are impractical. The requirement to raise air quality standards on a defined improvement line through to year 2013 is a high cost burden that this Council has been unwilling to accept. There is also a concern held by many, that while the abolition of wood fires will lead to improved air quality, other health issues may arise. Wood fires keep homes warm through the cold winter months and create a healthy air quality in the home, whereas electricity or gas heaters create less heat and a stuffy air quality in the home. This must lead to other respiratory problems, particularly with infants. Wood is an affordable and renewable resource for heating, whereas electricity or gas are rising in price and require cash. The TDC has placed restrictions on the installation of wood fires around Richmond in particular in an effort to meet air quality standards. If this restriction could be avoided it would be a better thing.

Cr Norriss and I, in our role as Committee Chairs, heard an appeal against the imposition of a "Dangerous Dog" notification. It is the first such appeal that I have been involved with and is an issue involving everyday living. We visited Sarge, the dog and found him very likable, absolutely full of go and in very good condition. I have to say that it was not so much that he is dangerous, but rather that he is not managed adequately in his urban environment which has led him to get into bother. We upheld the Notification, and appreciate the effort that staff have made to avoid this situation.

There have been a series of interesting Resource Consent Hearings so far this year. The "Waitapu Fisheries Ltd" mussel farming consent in Wainui Bay has been a significant decision, because of its location. It was held over three days, and following release of the decision, submitters have said to staff "that they have been heard, for the first time" In my opinion, it is a good outcome for all parties, but we will know better when the appeal deadline is passed.

The Hearing for a right to generate electricity in the Matiri valley continues and has taken longer than expected. Council has also received an application to generate electricity at the old Waimea Electric Power Board site on the Maruia falls.

There has been a hearing to allow the establishment of a "Sustainable Village" in the Motueka valley, and there is an application to establish a Crematorium and associated activities on the "Gardens of The World" property in Hope. These cases are interesting and demonstrate that our community is looking to the future.

I attended the launch of the "Code Red" programme run by the Nelson Environment Center. The objective is to encourage and reward reduction in the emission of "greenhouse" gas. It is based on the principle of individuals pledging to carry out an action that reduces the use of carbon emitting activities and being rewarded for achieving the pledge.

I am looking forward to considering the LTCCP submissions, and finalizing the Ten Year Financial Strategy. It is important to "be real" with the targets we set ourselves to do, and remember that the people we represent have to pay for them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Higgins". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Michael Higgins
Chair, Environment & Planning Committee