



16 April 2015

Wellington City Council
Policy and Reporting (COPO01)
P O Box 2199
WELLINGTON 6140

Draft Long Term Plan 2015-2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the Wellington City Council Draft Long Term Plan 2015 -2025 (LTP).

Council and Regional Public Health (RPH) have a common agenda – working with communities and where they live, work and play to improve and protect their quality of life. RPH wants to work with Council to make our common goal achievable and easier for our communities. By finding mutual points of interest and working together we can be more efficient, reduce the burden of engagement on our communities and be more effective in our policy implementation. A collaborative approach will also facilitate smarter use of each agencies finite resources.

This submission provides a public health perspective and information for Council to consider in their planning decisions. Wellington City Council's policy and planning are integral to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We recognize that this is the first round of the new LTP consultation documents and congratulate you on summarizing a large amount of important information into a short document. We hope to reflect this process with a concise submission. To achieve this we have selected two priority areas RPH would like to progress with Council during 2015-2025: Smokefree NZ 2025 and reducing and preventing obesity.

We would appreciate the opportunity to make an oral submission and we would be pleased to provide further information or clarification on any of the points raised in our submission. The contact point is:

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Yours Sincerely

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How this document is structured:

- A. An overview of Regional Public Health
- B. General comments on the Long Term Plan (LTP)
- C. Responses to your specific questions
- D. RPH priorities on improving the wellbeing of our shared communities by working towards a Smokefree NZ 2025 and reducing and preventing obesity.

A. WHO WE ARE – Regional Public Health

Regional Public Health (RPH) is a regional service based at the Hutt Valley District Health Board and serving the greater Wellington region. Our business is public health action - working with our community to make it a healthier, safer place to live. We have a particular focus on children, Māori and Pacific populations. We are funded mainly by the Ministry of Health but also have contracts with the District Health Boards and other agencies to deliver specific services.

Our staff include a range of occupations comprising : medical officers of health, public health advisors, health protection officers, vision and hearing technicians, public health nurses, and public health analysts.

RPH respects and acknowledges that Wellington City Council (WCC) decisions have a very significant impact on health. We see this through appropriate management of infrastructure (water and sewage) and creating environments that support wellbeing, for example, through reducing the impact of non-communicable diseases like exposure to tobacco, facilitating access to healthy food and promoting good urban design that encourages physical activity. This is the basis for making a submission on your LTP.

B. GENERAL COMMENTS ON YOUR LONG TERM PLAN

RPH congratulates WCC on your bold plan to invest in growth for our communities' ongoing prosperity¹. RPH would be heartened to see our communities prosper so they can enjoy an improved quality of life.

RPH would welcome the opportunity to work with you further in achieving this vision. We think a way to work towards communities living more enjoyable and fulfilling lives² is to incorporate a 'Health in All Policies³' approach. That doesn't mean 'doing health policy'. It means looking at the impact of policies, planning and decisions on the wellbeing of our shared communities. This collaborative approach acknowledges that each stakeholder has different drivers but have shared goals. An example of where this approach has been working well is with Christchurch City Council (CCC). RPH has been learning from our public health colleagues in Christchurch about this approach

¹ Draft LTP p.3

² Draft LTP p.7

³ <http://www.cph.co.nz/Files/CHIAPPInfoSheet1.pdf>

and would be willing to explore such an approach further if it is of interest to Council⁴. CCC has been using this approach for the last five years with some great outcomes⁵.

RPH supports your view - *Kāhore taku toa I te toa takitahi, he toa takitini we cannot succeed without the support of those around us*. RPH sees this as an area WCC could expand on. The message of expenditure on growth now for the prosperity of future communities was very strong, but less obvious was the method by which you were going to take the people with you or continue to garner the support of the community.

Community Water Fluoridation

It is likely that there will be submitters to the LTP who are opposed to community water fluoridation. RPH supports the continuation of community water fluoridation, based on national and international scientific research.

Capital & Coast District Health Board (CCDHB) covers the WCC geographic area and therefore, for consistency in advice, we have included CCDHB's position on community water fluoridation.

“The Capital & Coast District Health Board endorses community water fluoridation as an effective public health measure contributing to the maintenance of oral health, prevention of tooth decay and reduction in health inequalities. Community water fluoridation is a low cost measure that benefits people of all ages with natural teeth and has proven over the last 65 years to be very safe. Local drinking-water supplies that are already fluoridated should remain so. Where technically feasible, where local supplies are not fluoridated, local authorities are encouraged to implement water fluoridation programmes as soon as possible to improve the oral health of their communities⁶.”

RPH can provide Council with the latest scientific research on this matter and a comprehensive tailored workshop for elected members and/or council officers if it would be of interest.

C. IN RESPONSE TO YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. Do you support the broad approach taken in this plan of investing for growth, in addition to providing current levels of service?

RPH strongly supports the vision of growth for the future prosperity of communities.

RPH recommends that as part of the development of business cases for the proposed growth projects⁷ an assessment of the impact on the wellbeing of the community is included (a Health in All Policies approach).

⁴ <http://www.cph.co.nz/About-Us/Health-in-all-Policies/>

⁵ <http://www.cph.co.nz/files/CHIAPPAnnualReport2014.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.ccdhb.org.nz/news/2014/CCDHBFluoridationPositionStatement.pdf>

⁷ Draft LTP p.21

Communities continue to feel the effects of the economic recession. A recent study⁸ found that ethnic and income inequalities in infectious diseases such as rheumatic fever, skin infections, respiratory and gastrointestinal infections are large and increasing, especially for Maori and Pacific populations who are over represented in the poorest suburbs.

2. Do you support our plan to limit rates increases to 3.9% on average over ten years to fund investment for growth, as opposed to a 3.1%?

No Comment

3. Should Council take action to improve our international air connections?

No Comment

4. Do you think Council should be supporting the tech sector to stimulate it to grow?

No Comment

5. Do you think Council should be supporting the film industry to enable it to stay local and grow?

No Comment

6. Do you believe Council should support private owners with the strengthening of heritage buildings?

No Comment

7. Should Council strengthen its key Civic Square buildings, and offset the cost where possible?

No Comment

8. Should Wellington seek to remain the events capital of New Zealand?

No Comment

9. Do you support our plan to provide a new and improved venue for concerts?

No Comment

10. Do you support upgrading sports facilities where need has been demonstrated?

RPH supports facilities that encourage physical activity. We would also support the prioritisation of upgrades to those facilities that enable access to those who would gain the most. As part of any upgrade we would recommend Council review any food provision policies

⁸ Baker M G. et al (2012) Increasing incidence of serious infectious diseases and inequalities in New Zealand: a national epidemiological study, *The Lancet*, Mar 24; 379(9821):1112-9

to make the healthy choice the easy choice. RPH can support development of nutrition policies for your workplace or council facility.

- 11. Do you support the development of new tourism experiences to attract new visitors and get them to stay for longer?**

No comment

- 12. Do you support Council's activities to optimise infrastructure to realise savings and better cope with adverse events?**

RPH strongly supports Council investment into infrastructure which will contribute to building community resilience and intergenerational equity in funding and maintaining infrastructure assets.

- 13. Do you support the Council's transition to the use of smart technology such as parking sensors and LED streetlights?**

RPH supports this use of smart technology and energy efficient lights.

- 14. Do you support proposed improvements to transport that will allow for safer, faster and more reliable journeys?**

We support the proposal for improvements for safe, fast and reliable transport.

We support the plan of development along the transport spine and transport connections being improved for the town centres of Johnsonville, Tawa and Kilbirnie, as set out in the Urban Growth Plan.

We recommend that the transport hierarchy be pedestrian, cycle, public transport and then private transport.

We recommend that development of a suburban – urban separated cycleway be prioritised for construction. Separated cycleways are safer, thus lowering the access barrier to active transport.

Urban Design

- 15. Do you support the Council funding and taking action to regenerate inner-city precincts?**

Yes, RPH recommends that principles of Healthy Urban Design be considered when regenerating inner-city precincts. A tool RPH has found useful for this type of analysis has been the New South Wales Governments *Healthy Urban Development Checklist*⁹.

⁹ New South Wales Department of Health. *The Healthy Urban Development Checklist*; 2009

RPH would also encourage Council to consider opportunities for increasing the number of open spaces and green spaces.

16. Do you support our proposal to improve public spaces such as laneways?

We support the improvement of laneways. Safer, well lit and equitable access for disabled people are important planning decisions that should be given weight. These improve outcomes of daily physical activity and increased pedestrian movements in the inner city lanes.

17. Do you support Council's plan for strengthening suburban town centres including work in Johnsonville, Karori and Tawa?

We support the strengthening of suburban town centers. We commend Council for seeking opportunities to develop medium density housing. New Zealand's demographic trends are changing with increases in the number of older people, single member households and two people houses with no children. We recommend that WCC centre their development on demographic and socioeconomic factors that reflect current trends. We encourage the Council to use case studies that incorporate, sustainable, warm and energy efficient housing as a benchmark of what is to be expected from construction.

18. Do you generally agree with the priority projects identified in the Urban Growth Implementation Plan?

We support the general prioritisations of projects in the Urban Growth Implementation Plan. RPH recommends that project outcomes maximise effectiveness in the areas of:

- a) transport improvements, underpinned by increased active transport choice
- b) increased housing supply and choice
- c) protection and enhancement of the natural environment, using the planning framework made in the "Our Natural Capital" document
- d) increased city resilience, with safety improvements used as proxies to improve design, safety and usability to the public.

19. Do you see other matters as priorities?

Yes.

Our key message in this submission is **we seek the support of elected members to work with Council officers to progress Smokefree NZ 2025 and to reduce and prevent obesity.**

D. RPH PRIORITIES

RPH wants to support WCC in planning for environments that reduce exposure to tobacco and facilitate access to healthy food and increased physical activity.

SMOKEFREE 2025

RPH congratulates WCC for the progress they have made in this space already such as Midland Park and all WCC social housing becoming smokefree spaces. These are significant steps towards becoming a Smokefree NZ by 2025 and we want to continue to build on this progress. As you know over 80% of people in the Wellington region don't smoke. Any future smokefree policies will be catering to the majority.

What are the public health issues?

Tobacco smoking kills approximately 5000 New Zealanders every year. Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer and many other cancers and chronic diseases.

Our public health advisors (tobacco) work in many areas including Smoke-free Environments Act enforcement, supporting smokefree policies and better help for smokers to quit, all of which support the Government's goal of a Smokefree New Zealand by 2025.

Our goals are:

- Creating an environment that normalises being smokefree
- More smokefree environments
- Fewer young people and children start smoking
- More smokers quit

RPH can work with Council to demonstrate leadership in achieving Smokefree NZ 2025 by:

1. Increasing the number of smoke-free environments.
2. Extending smoke-free parks, including all Council properties, reserves etc.
3. Helping Council in the development of a licence scheme for tobacco retailers (to support actions to reduce the sales to young people and minors).
4. Encouraging Council and workplaces to provide smoking cessation workshops for staff.
5. Working with Council to develop smoke-free policy and clauses for events and venues.
6. Working with Council to promote smoke-free cars carrying children.
7. Working with Council on providing smoke-free rental accommodation.
8. Working with Council to ensure bars, restaurants and cafes are smoke-free.

RPH also has a range of smokefree resources and health information available, including banners for loan free of charge. Please contact us if you would like support for your smokefree community event.

REDUCING AND PREVENTING OBESITY

RPH recognises and supports WCC's previous work in prioritisation of cycleways and increased pedestrian walkways. RPH recommends WCC now gives focus to the next level of intervention, to create an environment that supports easy access to healthy affordable food in communities where people live, learn, work and play. WCC has an opportunity to show leadership in identifying and implementing strategies that support and promote healthy food provision in communities, Council owned cafes, vending machines, catering and sponsored events.

RPH recognises and congratulates WCC for the progress you have made in this area already with projects like the audit of vending machines in WCC owned buildings and facilities. We wish to work with you further to build on this progress.

What are the public health issues?

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Having good food choices and opportunities for physical activity is imperative. The Prime Minister's chief science advisor, Sir Peter Gluckman, recently stated in a World Health Organisation report on ending childhood obesity:

“There is an understandable tendency to see obesity as a problem for the health sector, but preventing childhood obesity demands the coordinated contributions of government ministries and institutions responsible for policies on education, food, agriculture, commerce and industry, finance/revenue, sport and recreation, media and communication, environmental and urban planning, transport and social affairs.”¹⁰

By next year, it is projected that excessive body weight will overtake tobacco use as the leading risk to health, making obesity a significant issue for New Zealand¹¹. International research recognises the close relationship between healthier populations and economic prosperity, arguing that healthy populations stimulate economic growth, lower health care costs, lure new businesses and create jobs¹².

What role does the Council have in reducing and prevention obesity?

A further range of opportunities are available to WCC to contribute to affordable, healthy food access, as well as the reduction and prevention of obesity. These opportunities could include further supporting:

- fruit and vegetable co-operatives
- community gardens and markets
- opportunities for cooking and nutrition literacy
- nutrition standards
- food policy for council owned facilities and events
- implementing good urban design principles
- reviewing food retail zoning conditions

Policy and environmental change have been identified as the foundation of obesity prevention in an environment that promotes eating too much and moving too little¹³¹⁴¹⁵¹⁶. Food policy is a cost

¹⁰ WHO interim report of the commission on ending childhood obesity. World Health Organization 2015, p.23
<http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/commission-ending-childhood-obesity-interim-report.pdf>

¹¹ ¹¹ Briefing to incoming health minister 2014 <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/briefing-incoming-minister-health-2014>

¹² Reeve,B., Ashe,M., Farias, R., Gostin, L.. State and Municipal Innovations in Obesity Policy: Why Localities Remain a Necessary Laboratory for Innovation. American Journal of Public Health: 105.3 (March 2015): 442-450.

¹³ Egger G, Swinburn B. An “ecological” approach to the obesity pandemic. BMJ 1997;315: 477-80.

effective and sustainable tool¹⁷ to support a healthy nutrition culture and is a strategy utilised as part of the *Healthy Together Victoria's Achievement Programme*¹⁸, and by an increasing number of District Health Boards and some councils.

RPH would like to work alongside WCC to support and prioritise strategies that impact on the food environment and the significant and unequal burden of nutrition related diseases in the Wellington region.

¹⁴ Harvard School of Public Health. The Obesity Prevention Source www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/ (accessed 2 June 2012)

¹⁵ Haby M, Vos T, Carter R et al. A new approach to assessing the health benefit from obesity interventions in children and adolescents: the assessing cost-effectiveness in obesity project. *Int J Obes* 2006;30:1463-75.

¹⁶ Vos T, Carter R, Barendregt J et al. Assessing Cost Effectiveness in Prevention (ACE Prevention): Final Report. Brisbane: University of Queensland and Melbourne: Deakin University; 2010.

¹⁷ Vos T, Carter R, Barendregt J et al. Assessing Cost Effectiveness in Prevention (ACE Prevention): Final Report. Brisbane: University of Queensland and Melbourne: Deakin University; 2010.

¹⁸ Healthy Together Victoria, Achievement Programme. Healthy Eating Benchmarks. Accessed 03 March 2015 at http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/downloads/Accessible_PDFs/Workplace/Benchmarks/Healthy_Eating_Benchmarks_WP.pdf