

Chairperson and Subcommittee Members
AUDIT AND RISK SUBCOMMITTEE

19 JUNE 2014

Meeting Status: **Public**

Purpose of Report: For Information

**MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AUDIT OF THE KAPITI
COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report provides the Council with an outline of the results of the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) audit of the Council's responses to the Resource Management Act (RMA) survey of 2012/13 and progress in implementing the opportunities that were identified for improving performance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DECISION

- 2 This report does not trigger the Council's Significance Policy.

BACKGROUND

- 3 In July 2013 all 78 local authorities were asked to complete the 2012/13 survey. Following the survey, Hill Young Cooper (HYC), an independent planning consultancy, were engaged by the MfE to undertake an audit of eight councils.
- 4 The councils were selected by the MfE using a number of criteria including the need to have a representative selection of councils across six groups identified in the survey (four different sized district/city councils, unitary and regional councils), and whether they had been subject to a recent audit and the geographical spread.
- 5 This Council along with seven others were selected. The purpose of the audit was to:
 - Assess the accuracy of key survey information
 - Identify examples of good practice
 - Identify opportunities for improvement.
- 6 The survey information chosen included the numbers of resource consents processed including further information requests, timeliness, time extensions, charges/discounts, compliance monitoring and plan changes.
- 7 HYC randomly selected 13 consent files to audit. The files were analysed and structured interviews took place. Council staff involved in RMA consents, compliance and district plan development were all interviewed

CONSIDERATIONS

Results

- 8 During 2012/13 the Council had comparably low numbers of resource consents processed within statutory timeframes, 20 days non-notified (refer attachment two – MfE Survey of Local Authorities 2012/13). The audit noted that was during a period when the resource consent team had reduced numbers of staff/management. The following table succinctly summarises resourcing during the audit period:

	2012						2013					
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
FTE's	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Planner	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Planning Manager	2	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Within 20 working days	85%			79%			75%			81%		

- 9 The audit also found some inaccuracies in resource consent information recorded in the councils data management system (NCS). This reflected the lack of training of staff which led to inconsistency in data reporting. The audit noted that incidences where there was high recording of processing days appear to be because of staff not closing the file in NCS. The audit also identified a number of consents where a discount was required in accordance with the Discount Regulations but was not applied because a request was not made by the applicant.
- 10 The audit also identified many examples of good practice, including:
- Land use and subdivision consents considered concurrently
 - The Continual Improvement Register – coordinated by the Regulatory Quality Services team which is being further developed through a formal Quality Assurance System (QAS)
 - Decisions are both emailed and posted to applicants, which minimises delays to applicants while waiting for decisions
 - Once granted consents are provided directly to the compliance team to manage any monitoring requirements

Opportunities for improvement

The following were identified as opportunities for improvement with commentary on implementation to date:

Number	Improvement	Progress
1.	Obtain new version of NCS and ensure staff are fully trained	Achieved New version obtained and initial training has occurred
2.	Prepare and document a Resource Consent Processing Manual customised for KCDC – that forms part of the QAS	Achieved in part - manuals from other Councils are being reviewed. The process will be included as part of the Activity Management Plan currently being drafted and will form part of the QAS
3	Separate further information requests from written approvals in the same letter and record separately in NCS	Achieved
4	Proactive management of external consultants including input into NCS	Achieved – planning staff include information into NCS to eliminate data entry errors
5	Review and implement Resource Management Discount on administration charges	Achieved in part – discount included initial letter to applicants and is included in the draft fees and changes for 2014/15

- 11 During the 2012/13 survey period the Council had one of the lowest number of further information requests (25%) in the Wellington region. This compares favourably with the national average of 32%, Wellington 51%, Porirua 52%, both Hutt Councils 26% and Horowhenua 43%.
- 12 In addition since April 2013 the team has identified 27 continuous improvements to the resource consents process. This includes:
- daily checks of all building consents by duty planner to ensure same day communication with applicants if resource consent(s) is/are required
 - introducing informal service level agreements with Council asset managers to ensure timely engineering advice
 - enabling online payment of application fees

- investigating the feasibility of online applications
 - monthly billing for large projects to enable better financial planning
 - proactive management of service requests to ensure 100% response times within 24 hours
 - update of the customer satisfaction survey and making it online sent with decision email to maximise responses (work in progress); and
 - introducing short reports for minor applications (preparing for 10 day consenting).
- 13 For this financial year the timeliness of releasing decision has significantly improved (98% within 20 working days compared with 81% in 2012/13) reflecting a change in management and increased resources. This is a pleasing result given resource consent numbers are significantly up on previous years.

Legal Considerations

- 14 The RMA outlines the procedures to be followed in processing resource consents including statutory timeframes, seeking further information, providing discounts on over time consents, monitoring and undertaking reviews of district plans and making plan changes.

Delegation

- 15 The Audit and Risk Subcommittee may make a decision under the following delegation in the Governance Structure Section C.4.6:

Without limiting the generality of this delegation the Subcommittee has the following functions, duties and powers:

Risk Management

6.13 Receive the external audit reports and review action to be taken by management on significant issues and audit recommendations raised within.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16 That the Audit and Risk Subcommittee note the progress being made by the Resource Consents and Compliance team in implementing the recommendations of the 2012/13 Ministry for the Environment audit.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Andrew Guerin
**Resource Consents and
Compliance Manager**

Tamsin Evans
Group Manager – Community Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment one – Audit of the Council’s responses to the 2012/13 RMA Survey by Hill Young Cooper

Attachment two – MfE Survey of Local Authorities 2012/2013