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**Committee** Policy, Finance and Strategy  
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## New Zealand Urban Design Protocol

### 1. Purpose

To seek the Committee's agreement to become a signatory to the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol, and to appoint a Design Champion.

### 2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. Background

The Ministry for the Environment has produced the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol as part of the Government's *Sustainable Development Programme of Action*. It is an acknowledgment that New Zealand is a significantly urbanised country and that we need to design towns and cities that are successful in meeting people's needs as well as being safe, accessible and prosperous.

The NZ Urban Design Protocol is in **Attachment 1**. The Ministry's publication "*The Value of Urban Design*" is in **Attachment 2**.

Urban design involves the design of cities, towns, their buildings and spaces and how people use them. It is concerned with the environmental, economic, social and cultural effects of design as well as the physical appearance of buildings and spaces.

The Urban Design Protocol proposes a range of strategies and initiatives for delivering on key urban design qualities. It proposes a partnership between central government, local government, property developers and professionals working in the area of urban development. It demonstrates a commitment by central government to improve the delivery of urban design across the country

and draws on the commitment of signatories to implement urban design initiatives, with the assistance of central government.

Seven key design qualities are identified that together create quality urban design:

- **Context:** seeing buildings, places and spaces as part of whole towns and cities
- **Character:** reflecting and enhancing the distinctive character, heritage and identity of our urban environment
- **Choice:** ensuring diversity and choice for people
- **Connections:** enhancing how different networks link together for people
- **Creativity:** encouraging innovative and imaginative solutions
- **Custodianship:** ensuring design is environmentally sustainable, safe and healthy
- **Collaboration:** communicating and sharing knowledge across sectors, professions and with communities.

To deliver on these qualities, the protocol outlines the contribution different groups can make. The role of central government and local government is outlined as:

#### Central government

- Lead at a national level
- Demonstrate quality urban design through its own development and activities
- Co-ordinate policies and actions across whole of government
- Develop appropriate legislation and policy guidance
- Set appropriate national standards and policy statements
- Promote national awareness of urban design
- Support local government
- Co-ordinate urban design research
- Work with education institutes to improve urban design education

#### Local government

- Lead at a regional/local level

- Demonstrate quality urban design through its own development and activities
- Develop appropriate statutory policies, rules and guidance
- Manage statutory decision-making processes to ensure quality urban design outcomes
- Promote regional/local awareness of urban design
- Share research and ‘best practice’
- Integrate urban management
- Work collaboratively with the private sector.

The signatories to the Protocol, as at 5 October 2006, are listed in **Attachment 3**.

## **4. Comment**

### **4.1 Greater Wellington’s Role in Urban Design**

Greater Wellington is not directly a regulator of the built environment. However, the Protocol is not just about appearances and built form, but also about environmental, economic, social and cultural consequences of design. It is also about the process of decision making.

Therefore, although Greater Wellington is not principally involved in deciding on the “design” of urban areas within the region, we have a number of functions, programmes, strategies and plans, that either seek to obtain the “qualities”, or provide a framework to direct decisions on the consequences of urban design. Some of the more significant strategies and plans, undertaken include the Long Term Community Council Plan (LTCCP), the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS), the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS).

#### **4.1.1 Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-16**

The current LTCCP describes community outcomes for the region. A number of these have direct relevance to the Urban Design Protocol:

##### ***Healthy Environment***

*We have clean water, fresh air and healthy soils. Well functioning and diverse ecosystems make up an environment that can support our needs. Resources are used efficiently. There is minimal waste and pollution.*

##### ***Quality lifestyle***

*Living in the Wellington region is enjoyable and people feel safe. A variety of lifestyles can be pursued. Our art, sport, recreation and entertainment scenes are enjoyed by all community members – and attract visitors.*

### ***Sense of Place***

*We have a deep sense of pride in the Wellington region. We value its unique characteristics – its rural, urban and harbour landscapes, its climate, its central location, and its capital city.*

### ***Connected Community***

*Access is quick and easy – locally, nationally and internationally. Our communication networks, air and sea ports, roads and public transport systems enable us to link well with others, both within and outside the region.*

### ***Essential Services***

*High quality and secure infrastructure and services meet our everyday needs. These are developed and maintained to support the sustainable growth of the region, now and in the future.*

### ***Healthy Community***

*Our physical and mental health is protected. Living and working environments are safe, and everyone has access to health care. Every opportunity is taken to recognise and provide for good health.*

## **4.1.2 Regional Land Transport Strategy**

The Council is required to have a RLTS. Amongst other matters the strategy must take into account how it:

- assists economic development
- assists safety and personal security
- improves access and mobility
- protects and promotes public health
- ensure environmental sustainability.

The RLTS is currently being reviewed. A draft strategy document is in a submission process. The Vision of the draft strategy is “*To deliver an integrated land transport system that supports the region’s people and prosperity in a way that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.*”

The principles of good urban design are relevant to the RLTS and will be relevant to a number of the projects that will implement the strategy.

#### 4.1.3 Regional Policy Statement

The RPS provides a statutory framework for considering “custodianship” to ensure urban design is environmentally sustainable. In particular, Chapter 14 ‘The Built Environment and Transportation’ specifically includes a policy that seeks that a high level of environmental quality in urban areas is promoted through encouraging good urban design (Policy 8).

The Resource Management and Electricity Legislation Amendment Act 2005 amended the Resource Management Act to give the regional council a role of:

*(gb) the strategic integration of infrastructure with land use through objectives, policies, and methods*

The review of the RPS will provide for this new function, with policies likely to be included that will have direct relevance to urban design. This will reflect matters identified specifically in the WRS, as outlined below.

#### 4.1.4 Wellington Regional Strategy

Greater Wellington is a key participant in the WRS. The purpose of the WRS is to create an integrated framework to achieve sustainable growth in the region. A significant focus of the WRS will be on the form of any urban growth. An important role of the WRS is to create “context” and “collaboration” throughout the region.

One of the three focus areas of the strategy (currently subject to public consultation) is investment in good regional form. Quality urban design is a key component of the focus area, which is articulated as:

*“Quality urban design is about cities that look good, feel safe and are easy to get around. Good design is another core component of international competitiveness.”*

Under the proposed WRS participating Councils will commit to signing up to the Urban Design Protocol by March 2007. It is proposed that a joint regional action plan be prepared, outlining how the region will implement the protocol. Details of the contents of the action plan are yet to be finalised. It is possible that the Greater Wellington Action Plan may effectively become the regional action plan.

## 4.2 Benefits of Being a Signatory to the Protocol

The Ministry for the Environment advocates that becoming a signatory to the Protocol signifies an organisational commitment to continual improvement of urban areas. Other benefits offered include access to a network for sharing information, training and a package of resources. Signatories are also given preference in future funding.

Signing the Protocol will be a useful mechanism to reinforce that Greater Wellington has a number of functions, activities, strategies and plans that seek quality urban design outcomes, and therefore, has a role in quality urban

design. The Protocol will also assist with integrating all the various activities Greater Wellington undertakes that contribute to quality urban design outcomes. It will also promote a more comprehensive approach to thinking about how our activities can further improve quality urban design around the region. As a signatory, Greater Wellington will also give effect to the role of promoting sustainable urban form as proposed in the amended Resource Management Act.

### **4.3 Commitments as a Signatory to Protocol**

Signatories to the Protocol commit to putting quality urban design principles into effect by developing, monitoring and reporting on a set of actions. Signatories choose their actions within six months of signing to the Protocol, then report every two years on actions. The Ministry for the Environment will publish organisational progress. Implementation and monitoring will be relevant across the Council, reflecting Greater Wellington's various roles in environmental and transport policy and as a property owner.

The development, monitoring and reporting on actions will focus, to a certain extent, on those areas of Council that already produce plans and strategies that reinforce the "qualities" of urban design. As a signatory to the Protocol there will also be an expectation that any property, infrastructure or development under the control of Greater Wellington will also need to demonstrate the design qualities.

### **4.4 Appointment of an Urban Design Champion**

The Protocol requires the appointment of a 'Design Champion'. This person has to be someone influential, at a senior level of the organisation. The Champion's role is to promote and champion urban design. The Ministry for the Environment has prepared a document entitled "Appointing an Urban Design Champion". This is in **Attachment 4**.

It is recommended that a Councillor be appointed as the Council's Champion. This is consistent with the approach taken by Wellington City Council, who has appointed Mayor Prendergast as its Champion. The Councillor will be supported by members of the Executive Management Team.

The person appointed as Champion will need to set aside designated time to promote and champion quality urban design.

## **5. Communication**

Subject to the Committee's decision, a press statement will be prepared confirming Greater Wellington decision to become a signatory to the Urban Design Protocol.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Committee recommends that Council:*

1. **Receives** the report.
2. **Notes** the content of the report.
3. **Agrees** to become a signatory to the *Urban Design Protocol*.
4. **Appoints** [...] as the Council's *Urban Design Champion*.
5. **Instructs** officers to make the appropriate arrangements for signing the *Protocol*.
6. **Delegates** to the *Urban Design Champion* the authority to sign the *Protocol* on behalf of the Council.
7. **Instructs** officers to prepare an action plan, to be presented to the *Committee* for approval.

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**Attachment 1: NZ Urban Design Protocol**

**Attachment 2: Value of the value of Urban Design**

**Attachment 3: Signatories to the Protocol**

**Attachment 4: Appointing an Urban Design Champion (Ministry for the Environment)**