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Corporate Plan Output: Supply of Water	

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the funding and development of a water use strategy that will ensure the future water needs of the Christchurch District are met in the long term. Such a strategy must be environmentally, socially, economically and technically robust. The strategy will be a co-operative effort with the Canterbury Regional Council, which is also making budgetary provision for components of the work. Approval is being sought from the Joint Council Special Committee concurrent with this report.

THE NEED FOR A STRATEGY

Christchurch's development to date has not been limited by constraints on water supply. Infrastructure has been provided incrementally as required, with the source of water generally very close to the demand. Issues that have arisen over recent years however, mean that careful planning will be required to ensure that Christchurch's water requirements will not constrain the district's growth and health over the coming decades. Events that have given rise to the need for this planning include:

- The report prepared by the (then) North Canterbury Catchment Board in 1986 entitled *The Christchurch Artesian Aquifers* provided a comprehensive summary of the Christchurch West-Melton aquifer system and indicated that groundwater resources were limited.
- Although demand from the municipal supply has remained relatively constant over the last decade, abstraction from private wells (particularly horticulture and agriculture) has steadily increased.
- Low pressures in the aquifer in the Woolston area, causing surface water to be drawn into the first aquifer with a consequential deterioration of groundwater quality.
- Concern about the effects of water abstraction on spring flows.
- Concern about contamination from industrial land use over unconfined aquifers on the west side of the city exacerbated by submissions to the City Plan for more industrial land in the recharge area.
- Low water levels (during 1989 and again in 1999) reducing the effectiveness of the infrastructure at several pumping stations.

- The city being required by legislation to develop a long term capital works programme; this cannot be considered complete until resource constraints that may affect water supply infrastructure are adequately understood and catered for.

The city therefore has a clear need to develop a long-term strategy to meet the water requirements of Christchurch citizens at least cost while minimising adverse environmental effects. Such a strategy would normally flow on from a regional plan for water management. In the absence of a regional plan, preparation of the strategy will require substantial involvement from the Canterbury Regional Council as well as the Christchurch City Council. Developing a Christchurch District Water-Use Strategy and the Water Chapter of the Natural Resources Regional Plan concurrently is likely to be mutually beneficial in terms of arriving at the optimal solution to social, environmental, technical and economic requirements. It is expected that the strategy will:

- Recommend how the Christchurch district will meet its water requirements in the long term.
- Provide a focus for planning activities of common interest to both councils (eg land use in recharge areas and surface water/groundwater interaction).
- Allow businesses, agriculture and industry to plan with confidence regarding their future water supplies.
- Facilitate the formation of user groups where appropriate.
- Provide methods to use the resource most efficiently.
- Ensure that deterioration of groundwater quality is minimised.
- provide a sound basis for the Regional Council to prepare a management plan that meets its policy responsibilities.

PROPOSED PROCESS

The proposed process is described in Figure 1 (attached). As far as the city is concerned, the Water Strategy will sit alongside the Water Supply Asset Management Plan and the Annual Plan as means of carrying out the city's strategic plan requirements with respect to water supply. While not a statutory document in itself, the Water Use Strategy will provide an important resource for developing and amending water related sections of both the City and Regional Plans. The timeframe reflects the desire of both organisations to complete the process by June 2001.

SCOPE

The scope of the process is necessarily broad. The issues and information required from the strategy are outlined in Figure 2 (attached). The issues are separated according to whether the Canterbury Regional Council, the Water Supply Section of the City Council, or other sections of the City Council have the major responsibility for providing the information.

From the city's viewpoint, the strategy should be viewed as a City Council project rather than just a Water Services Unit initiative. The Environmental Policy and Planning Unit has an interest in ensuring the security of supply from private wells by businesses in Christchurch as well as land use issues, and has indicated its support for the project.

BUDGET

The estimated budget for the City Council's part of the project is as follows:

Christchurch Water Future Strategy - Proposed Budget

	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01
Technical Investigations			
Surface/Groundwater interaction studies		60,000	
Investigations of supply alternatives		40,000	
Seeking Community Views			
Database preparation and research current attitudes	38,000		
Publish issues and options document, media programme & advertising, focus groups		150,000	
Obtain and analyse feedback on draft strategy			50,000
Admin and Co-ordination			
Discussion paper and obtain expressions of interest from appropriate consultants	5,000		
Preparation of draft strategy			50,000
Preparation of final strategy			50,000
co-ordinator		80,000	80,000
Totals	43,000	330,000	230,000

The funding sought for the 1999/2000 year is in excess of the \$290,000 requested in the draft budget. This reflects comments by some Councillors made at a briefing meeting last year that the three year time frame initially proposed was too long and that the strategy should be complete by June 2000.

The Canterbury Regional Council can expect to make use of the City Council's in-depth public consultation for the Christchurch District Section of its Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP). The Canterbury Regional Council intends to produce a document for issues and management options for the Christchurch District specifically, and has allowed for related surface water investigations directly relevant to the strategy that go beyond NRRP requirements. This work is being considered in the current Regional Council budget process and is expected to cost the Regional Council in excess of \$200,000.

It is clear that public consultation is an important part of the strategy. This is in keeping with the Council's policy of seeking community views. Issues such as water charges and future services of water will be controversial and it is important that public input be actively sought from the outset.

This budget excludes City Council staff time that is already allowed for in the proposed budget, expected to amount to approximately one full time equivalent (\$80,000 approximately). This input will be from existing staff in both the Water Services and Environmental Policy and Planning Units.

ORGANISATION AND REPORTING

It is proposed that several specific interest teams composed of appropriate staff from each organisation be set up to divide the strategy into manageable components, as shown in Figure 3 (attached). The method of reporting is a matter for the Joint Council Special Committee but is likely to include a core group of elected representatives and key stakeholders.

The Committee resolved

1. That the development of a Water Use Strategy for completion by June 2001 be endorsed.
2. That the City Services Committee indicate its support for funding of \$330,000 in the 1999/2000 year and \$230,000 in the following year to complete the strategy.

Note: At the City Services Committee Annual Plan meeting on 11 February 1999, it was resolved to further recommend to the Council:

1. That all reports to the Council and all policy development work relating to the City Council part in the strategy development be through the City Services Committee to the Council.
2. That the strategy take account of the Council's current and future economic development policy for Canterbury.

3. That Councillors Denis O'Rourke, Anna Crighton and Ron Wright be the City Council's consultation team during the strategy development process.