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<p>Corporate Plan Output: Supply of Water</p>	

The purpose of this report is to advise the Joint Christchurch City Council/Canterbury Regional Council Special Committee of the reduced funding being sought for this project from City Council resources, since the meeting of 17 February 1999.

At the February meeting of the Joint Committee, Councilors heard that the Regional Council has sufficient knowledge of the confined groundwater system underlying Christchurch to be confident that abstraction will not adversely affect the resource until demand exceeds about 143 million m³ pa (70% increase in current demand). This confidence was echoed in media statements that followed. This interpretation of existing information came as news to City Council Staff whose long term water-supply planning was based on the concept of small but significant risks and adverse environmental effects with increasing demand, some of which required further investigation.

A large part of the Joint Strategy initially proposed by the City Council was to do with public consultation as to whether these risks warranted additional conservation efforts or the expense of obtaining water from elsewhere. “Elsewhere” referred particularly to modest cost options like piping water from elsewhere in the City where there was less risk. The City has already had to do this at Woolston. Given public assurances that the risks (apart from at Woolston) will be not be significant until abstraction almost doubles, it would appear that the consultation exercise proposed as part of the strategy is unnecessary at this stage. At worst, a perception of mixed messages could give rise to confusion.

One of the main reasons the City Council proposed joint work on a strategy for Christchurch District water use was to investigate the effects of resource issues on the City’s Water Supply Asset Management Plan. The recent statements by Canterbury Regional Council staff indicate that groundwater availability will not affect the Council’s water supply operation for several decades, other than simply adjusting for lower groundwater levels. This is good news for Christchurch ratepayers since the Asset Management Plan shows that, given this knowledge, water rates and charges can be held at current levels (excluding inflation) for the 25 year planning period. Given the absence of the need to consider wider resource issues, the design of pump stations (and improvements to existing stations) is a relatively straightforward technical exercise. It would therefore appear to be unnecessary to proceed with the joint strategy as outlined in the February 1999 Report from the viewpoint of water supply asset management.

Following a meeting with Canterbury Regional Council staff to clarify the public statements, the Water Services Unit has reduced the \$300,000 sought for the Strategy work through the City’s Annual Plan to \$100,000. It is proposed that the City put its effort into responding to the Regional Councils Issues and Options document on the Christchurch-West Melton water resource due out this year, instead of the investigation and consultation work previously planned as part of the Strategy.

The co-operation exercise from which the strategy proposal began will continue, however. Staff of both organisations have agreed to continue to co-operate in the exchange of information in the preparation of the Water Chapter of the Natural

Resources Regional Plan. This Plan has been programmed by the Regional Council for release as a Notified Proposed Regional Plan by June 2001. As the Water Chapter nears completion, both organisations will have a clearer picture of groundwater management in the District. At that stage, the scope of a long-term supply strategy for the District will be reassessed.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Joint Special Committee note the intention of the City Council to downsize the funding proposal for joint work on the Christchurch District Water Strategy
 2. That staff of both Councils continue to co-operate in information and document exchange as the Issues and Options Document for the Christchurch-West Melton water resource is prepared.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be endorsed.