

4. TRAINING FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT HEARING MEMBERS

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The purpose of this report is to outline suggested post-election training for Councillors and Community Board members who wish to serve on resource management hearings panels.

I have discussed this matter briefly with Aidan Prebble, the Council's Resource Management Solicitor, and we suggest that two seminars be held in November 2001, the final dates to be organised in consultation with the Chairman of the Resource Management Committee. Attendance at both seminars would be a necessary prerequisite to serving as a hearings panel member.

The seminars would cover the following matters:

1. Overview of the Resource Management Act, including what is sustainable management.
2. The District Plan – how it works.
3. Key sections of the Resource Management Act, including sections 104 and 105.
4. Notification and non-notification of resource consents.
5. Resource management hearings, including:
 - the purpose of hearings
 - the powers and duties of panel members
 - Section 39 – the need to avoid unnecessary formality
 - chairmanship
 - legal fish-hooks
 - bias and predetermination
 - conflicts of interest
 - protocol and procedures
 - managing conflict
 - ensuring sound decision-making
 - conditions and reasons
 - planners' role and relationship with the Council
 - dealing with applicants/submitters
6. The role of the Environment Court.

There are a number of very competent professionals from both within and outside the Council who are available to speak to prospective panel members on these subjects.

A separate specialist seminar could be arranged for those people who are going to chair hearings panels.

A further training option which could be put in place would be to provide hearings panels with on-going feedback. This may be particularly useful for new panel members with little experience. This feedback could be provided by the hearings advisers or someone from outside the Council with hearings experience, such as a hearings commissioner.

These are our thoughts on post-election training, but we would welcome further ideas on useful training that could be provided. If committee members have any ideas about other training they would like to have, they could contact either the writer or the Environmental Services Manager.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's Recommendation: For discussion.