

Friday 6 October 2022

OIA IRO-280

Email: [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Tēnā koe [REDACTED],

Local Government Official Information and Meeting Act request for Instances where Wellington Water has sought money from councils for leak detection and repair, asset renewals and new water infrastructure and Councils have turned down such requests

Thank you for your official information request received Monday 15 August 2022. You requested information on instances where Wellington Water has sought money from councils for leak detection and repair, asset renewals and new water infrastructure and Councils have turned down such requests.

Following your request, clarification was sought on the scope of your enquiry, and an email from our Manager, Service Planning was sent to you on Monday 29 August 2022, to confirm that scope.

The updated scope of your request covers the period Thursday 1 July 2021 to Wednesday 10 August 2022 and is restricted to Wellington City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council.

On Monday 12 September 2022, Wellington Water sent a letter advising you that more time was required to search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit to advise you of our decision on your request.

As such, the due date of your request was amended to Friday 30 September 2022 in accordance with [Section 14\(1\)\(a\)](#) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (The Act).

Our Group Manager, Network Strategy & Planning then contacted you by email on Friday 30 September 2022 to inform you that we had been unable to meet the extended timeline. The reasons for this included that we have new staff in the team who do not have all the history and context, and there is a level of complexity in the way we work with our councils to agree funding levels. Our Group Manager apologised for the delay in fulfilling your request and offered to discuss the request with you.

Information to be released associated with your request

We have interpreted your request as relating to funding requests that have been turned down by Wellington City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council during the period Thursday 1 July 2021 to Friday 12 August 2022.

In accordance with Section 17(e) of The Act we have no information to release to you.

This is on the grounds that all council decisions relating to funding requests are publicly available on the respective websites of these councils, and no requests considered by council were turned down.

However, this statement should be taken in context of the funding levels agreed by councils within their Long -Term Plans, relative to the funding advice provided by Wellington Water.

Background and context for funding decisions

The letter from the Wellington Water Chair to the Dominion Post on Wednesday 10 August 2022, which is the basis for your request, contained an explanation of the relative responsibilities between Wellington Water and its owner councils and the way funding is decided.

We note that the point of the comment in the letter that you highlight, is not to imply that any specific funding request has been made and denied, as you have inferred. Rather, the point of that comment is to make clear the connection between investment and outcomes. It is made within a letter whose overall aim is to make clear the distinction between the roles of Wellington Water as advisor, and councils as decision-makers. These points were being made in the wider context of the issue of risk to sustainable water supply in the region. The Chair is stating that risk is a consequence of investment choices. Therefore councils, who are asset owners and make investment choices, are ultimately responsible for asset performance and outcomes – not Wellington Water. The paragraph you have highlighted is a device to emphasise that connection and distinction – not an implied reference to any specific decision.

We would like to offer some further background and context for the way funding is determined for activities such as leak detection and repair, asset renewals and new infrastructure.

Council long term plans determine the funding levels

Councils own their three waters assets and are responsible for setting the levels of investment and levels of service. Wellington Water's role is to provide investment planning advice to councils and then to manage the delivery of three waters services once the investment levels are set.

Council long-term plans (LTPs) are developed by each council to outline their plans for forward spending. The spending decisions on three waters services by councils which own

Wellington Water are informed by advice from Wellington Water. For the 2021-31 LTP, Wellington Water generally provided advice in three stages – an “early signals” stage, which gave an unconstrained view of investment required over the period of the LTP; an investment options stage (e.g. low, medium and high – although this varied by council) which provided councils with the opportunity to signal their appetite for investment within the context of their wider planning obligations; and a final budget, agreed with council.

The investment advice Wellington Water provided for the 2021/31 LTP is contained on the Wellington Water website and finalised LTPs are available on the website of each council. In addition, Wellington Water publishes an asset management plan (Regional Service Plan) for each council once they have confirmed their investment levels, and these are also available on our website.

Operational budgets and annual plans allow for adjustment

Wellington Water also manages operational expenditure on behalf of its shareholding councils. This expenditure is also agreed by councils and reviewed annually. As with LTP advice, these decisions are available in council reports and minutes on their websites.

I would like to sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to your request. If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [REDACTED] Group Manager Network Strategy and Planning (email - [REDACTED]@wellingtonwater.co.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui,

[REDACTED]
Manager, Customer Hub
Wellington Water Ltd