



6 December 2024

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PO Box 805, Wellington

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P Robins

[fyi-request-29042-ced94d5e@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-29042-ced94d5e@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe P Robins,

### **Your Official Information Act 1982 request, reference OIA 2425-0430**

I am responding to your email of 4 November 2024 to the Department of Internal Affairs (the Department) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*I am politely and formally submitting a request for all communications, in any form, between the Department and the Office of the Minister of Local Government regarding the Wellington City Council for October 2024. This includes any exchanges between the Minister and the Secretary.*

On 28 November 2024, the Department sought to clarify the scope of your request with you.

On 2 December 2024, the Department informed you that, as we did not receive a response from you, we would interpret your request as:

*..communications, in any form, between the Department and the Office of the Minister of Local Government regarding potential Crown intervention into the Wellington City Council for October 2024*

On this date, you were also advised that the date to respond to you was extended by five working days, to 9 December 2024, under section 15A(b) of the Act, to allow for the necessary consultations.

### **Response to your request**

There are 17 documents within scope of your request.

I am releasing to you one document, and partially releasing five documents with some information withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of natural persons; and
- 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty, of the Act.

I am withholding six documents under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act. The final version of one of these documents, Document Eight, is publicly available on the Department's website at:

[www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Local-Government-2024/\\$file/Final-Terms-of-Reference-Crown-Observer-to-Wellington-City-Council.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Local-Government-2024/$file/Final-Terms-of-Reference-Crown-Observer-to-Wellington-City-Council.pdf).

I am also refusing four documents under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information is publicly available. Proactively released information can be found on the Department's website at: [www.dia.govt.nz/Proactive-Release#LG](http://www.dia.govt.nz/Proactive-Release#LG).

I am refusing Document Six as it is a duplicate of Document Three. As noted above, this document has been proactively released.

Additionally, on 14 October 2024, the Minister of Local Government met with officials from the Department. At this meeting, Wellington City Council's situation and potential options for intervention were discussed. Following this meeting and throughout the week beginning 14 October 2024, several phone conversations of a transactional nature were held between the Office of the Minister of Local Government and Departmental officials regarding potential timeframes and other process related details.

As no notes were kept of this meeting or phone conversations, I am unable to provide specific recollections.

### **Public interest considerations**

As is required by section 9(1) of the Act, consideration has been given as to whether the withholding of information is outweighed by other public interest considerations which would make it desirable to make this information available. In this instance, it is not considered to be the case.

### **Accessing the Ombudsman**

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my decision by the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Jeremy Cauchi

**Director Ministerial and Monitoring**



Appendix A: Documents within scope

No.	Title	Date	Decision (Release, partial release, withhold, or refused)	Withholding grounds under the Act
1	[Email chain] RE: Media response for urgent review	15 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(h)
2	[Email] Wellington City Council – issues and options	17 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a), 9(2)(g)(i)
3	<i>Attachment</i> Briefing Wellington City Council Issues and Options	Undated	Refused	18(d)
4	<i>Attachment</i> New Zealand Gazette – Notice Regarding Ministerial Powers of Local Government Assistance and Intervention	Undated	Refused	18(d)
5	<i>Attachment</i> Appendix B – Title withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Official Information Act 1982	Undated	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)
6	Attachment 4: [Briefing] Wellington City Council – issues and options [PDF]	17 October 2024	Refused	Duplicate
7	[Email chain] RE: WCC – draft letter and TOR	22 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a), 9(2)(g)(i)
8	<i>Attachment</i> Draft TOR Appointment of Crown Observer to Wellington City Council	22 October 2024	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)
9	<i>Attachment</i> Draft Letter Minister of Local Government to Wellington City Council – notice of intention to appoint Crown Observer	22 October 2024	Refused	18(d)
10	<i>Attachment</i> Reactive QA	22 October 2024	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)
11	<i>Attachment</i> Draft press release	Undated	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)

No.	Title	Date	Decision (Release, partial release, withhold, or refused)	Withholding grounds under the Act
12	[Email] possible timelines	22 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a)
13	<i>Attachment</i> Possible timelines for Cabinet process. Wellington Crown Observer	22 October 2024	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)
14	[Email] RE: Service Coverage	22 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a)
15	[Email] Updated timelines	23 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a)
16	<i>Attachment</i> Updated – Possible timelines for Cabinet process Wellington Crown Observer	23 October 2024	Withheld	9(2)(g)(i)
17	[Email] RE_updated timelines	23 October 2024	Partially released	9(2)(a)

**Appendix B: Documents for release**

## Document 1

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**From:** Fergus Broom <[Fergus.Broom@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Fergus.Broom@parliament.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 15 October 2024 8:49 am

**To:** Michael Lovett <[Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz)>; Richard Ward <[Richard.Ward@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Richard.Ward@dia.govt.nz)>;  
Anthea Oliver <[Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz)>; Kate Barnes <[Kate.Barnes@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Kate.Barnes@dia.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** RE: Media response for urgent review

Thanks – will raise the seeking advice point but I'm sure this is intentional

9(2)(h)

The text "9(2)(h)" is followed by two large grey rectangular redaction boxes. The first box covers the majority of the line, and the second box covers the remainder of the line below it.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Ngā mihi

Fergus

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**From:** Michael Lovett <@>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 15 October 2024 8:41 AM

**To:** Richard Ward <@>; Fergus Broom <@>; Anthea Oliver <@>; Kate Barnes <@>

**Subject:** RE: Media response for urgent review

....and a way through maybe to state he is considering, rather than seeking advice.

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**From:** Richard Ward <@>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 15, 2024 8:40 AM

**To:** Fergus Broom <@>; Anthea Oliver <@>; Michael Lovett <Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz>; Kate Barnes <@>

**Subject:** RE: Media response for urgent review

Thanks Fergus

This largely repeats what the Minister of Finance publicly said yesterday as reported in the Herald. [Nicola Willis says Wellington City Council is a shambles, Government watching very closely - NZ Herald](#)

[@Kate Barnes](#) understand you are reviewing.

My read is that most of this is opinion and 9(2)(h)

The question for the Office is the highlighted piece as this confirms a commissioning from the Office for advice. Saying this will lead to ongoing follow ups from media about what advice was provided, what did it say etc. So just need to check Office comfort with this and that advice will be commissioned.

Nga mihi

Rich

*"Awesome people delivering high quality advice to decision makers"*

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**From:** Fergus Broom <@>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 15, 2024 8:30 AM

**To:** Anthea Oliver <@>; Richard Ward <@>; Michael Lovett <@>

**Cc:** Allie Chau <@>; Sophie Farrell

<@>

**Subject:** Media response for urgent review

**Importance:** High

Hi all, can I please have this media response reviewed by **9:10am today**

If legal could have a look too that would be great thanks. Happy to take call to discuss

Wellington ratepayers expect the City Council to focus on delivering core services, keeping rates under control, and ensuring a financially sustainable future.

While councils can amend their Long Term Plans, last week's change of direction raises serious questions about the Council's priorities. Ratepayers, already facing the largest rates rise in the country, deserve clarity and responsible leadership. It seems the Council is increasingly focused on themselves rather than the people they serve.

Wellingtonians are seeking assurance from the City Council on the next steps and what impact these decisions could have on their rates bill. Transparency is essential for restoring public confidence in the Council's actions.

I'm closely monitoring the situation and I am seeking advice on whether any Government intervention may be warranted, given the potential impacts on Wellington's Long Term Plan and the governance challenges that may result. Ratepayers deserve assurance that Council decisions are being made with their best interests in mind.

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## Document 2

**From:** [Anthea Oliver](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#); [Allie Chau](#); [Sophie Farrell](#)  
**Cc:** [Paul James](#); [Michael Lovett](#); [Richard Ward](#); [Jorge Bolanos Lopez](#); [Kate Barnes](#); [Hamiora Bowkett](#); [Ministerial Correspondence](#); [Aakaansha Lal](#)  
**Subject:** Wellington City Council - issues and options  
**Date:** Thursday, 17 October 2024 4:40:22 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[LG20244577 Appendix B - 9\(2\)\(g\)\(i\)](#)  
[LG20244577 Appendix A New Zealand Gazette - Notice Regarding Ministerial Powers of Local Government Assistance and Intervention.pdf](#)  
[LG20244577 Briefing Wellington City Council - issues and options.docx](#)  
[LG20244577 Briefing Wellington City Council - issues and options.pdf](#)

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Kia ora koutou

Please find attached the briefing: **LG20244577 Wellington City Council – issues and options**

The briefing has two appendices:

- **Appendix A: New Zealand Gazette – Notice Regarding Ministerial Powers of Local Government Assistance and Intervention**
- **Appendix B: 9(2)(g)(i)**

Happy to chat if there are any questions.

Ngā mihi,

Anthea

**Anthea Oliver** ([she/her](#)) | Manager | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

**The Department of Internal Affairs** Te Tari Taiwhenua

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## Document 7

**From:** [Kate Barnes](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#); [Anthea Oliver](#); [Allie Chau](#); [Sophie Farrell](#)  
**Cc:** [Jorge Bolanos Lopez](#); [Richard Ward](#); [Michael Lovett](#); [Karen Hope-Cross](#); [Adam Bennett](#); [Eden Green](#)  
**Subject:** RE: WCC - draft letter and TOR  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 10:37:45 am  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[DRAFT TOR Appointment of Crown Observer to Wellington City Council.docx](#)  
[DRAFT LETTER Minister of Local Government to Wellington City Council - notice of intention to appoint Crown Observer.docx](#)  
[Reactive Q&A.docx](#)  
[DRAFT press release.docx](#)

Hi Fergus,

Updated documents with tracked changes attached.

Please note we have updated the suggested term of appointment to 31 July 2025 – one month after planned adoption of the LTP. The term can easily be cut short, but it is more difficult to extend (essentially have to redo this process).

We consider the requirement for monthly reports supersedes any value of an interim report in Feb 2025, however if you still want to include this, your suggested wording is sufficient.

Thanks

Kate

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

**The Department of Internal Affairs** Te Tari Taiwhenua

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*I work primarily from Whanganui, but always happy to meet via Teams.*

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**From:** Fergus Broom <[Fergus.Broom@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Fergus.Broom@parliament.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 10:02 am

**To:** [Anthea Oliver](mailto:Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz) <[Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz)>; [Allie Chau](mailto:Allie.Chau@parliament.govt.nz) <[Allie.Chau@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Allie.Chau@parliament.govt.nz)>; [Sophie Farrell](mailto:Sophie.Farrell@parliament.govt.nz) <[Sophie.Farrell@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Sophie.Farrell@parliament.govt.nz)>

**Cc:** [Kate Barnes](mailto:Kate.Barnes@dia.govt.nz) <[Kate.Barnes@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Kate.Barnes@dia.govt.nz)>; [Jorge Bolanos Lopez](mailto:Jorge.BolanosLopez@dia.govt.nz) <[Jorge.BolanosLopez@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Jorge.BolanosLopez@dia.govt.nz)>; [Richard Ward](mailto:Richard.Ward@dia.govt.nz) <[Richard.Ward@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Richard.Ward@dia.govt.nz)>; [Michael Lovett](mailto:Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz) <[Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Michael.Lovett@dia.govt.nz)>; [Karen Hope-Cross](mailto:Karen.Hope-Cross@dia.govt.nz) <[Karen.Hope-Cross@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Karen.Hope-Cross@dia.govt.nz)>; [Adam Bennett](mailto:Adam.Bennett2@dia.govt.nz) <[Adam.Bennett2@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Adam.Bennett2@dia.govt.nz)>; [Eden Green](mailto:Eden.Green@dia.govt.nz) <[Eden.Green@dia.govt.nz](mailto:Eden.Green@dia.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** RE: WCC - draft letter and TOR

I suspect on these, that the Minister [9\(2\)\(g\)\(i\)](#)

[9\(2\)\(g\)\(i\)](#). Happy to receive updated versions of these at 10:45 if you want to send them over together

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**From:** Anthea Oliver <@>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 9:54 AM  
**To:** Fergus Broom <@>; Allie Chau <@>; Sophie Farrell <@>  
**Cc:** Kate Barnes <@>; Jorge Bolanos Lopez <@>; Richard Ward <@>; Michael Lovett <@>; Karen Hope-Cross <@>; Adam Bennett <@>; Eden Green <@>  
**Subject:** RE: WCC - draft letter and TOR

Kia ora Fergus

In addition, I have also now attached a draft press release and draft reactive Q&A.

Ngā mihi,

Anthea

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**From:** Anthea Oliver  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 9:30 am  
**To:** Fergus Broom <@>; Allie Chau <@>; @>  
**Cc:** Kate Barnes <@>; Jorge Bolanos Lopez <@>; Richard Ward <@>; Michael Lovett <@>; Karen Hope-Cross <@>  
**Subject:** WCC - draft letter and TOR

Kia ora Fergus

Please find attached the draft letter and TOR for WCC. Note that there are a few things that are highlighted in yellow in the TOR – these will be added in once they are finalised (post consultation).

Happy to discuss any feedback.

Ngā mihi,

Anthea

**Anthea Oliver** ([she/her](#)) | Manager | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

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## Document 12

**From:** [Kate Barnes](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#)  
**Subject:** possible timelines  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 4:28:07 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[Possible timelines for Cabinet process. Wellington Crown Observer.docx](#)

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Hi Fergus,

Just to add to the mix – I've updated Jorge's advice from Friday on possible timelines if appointment goes ahead. If you can indicate a preference by end of the week that would be helpful.

Thanks  
Kate

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātoke - Local Government Branch

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## Document 14

**From:** [Kate Barnes](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#); [Anthea Oliver](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Service coverage  
**Date:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 1:32:53 pm  
**Attachments:** [image002.jpg](#)  
[image003.jpg](#)

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Hi Fergus,

The council officers' report to WCC on 10/10 indicated cuts of between \$400m and \$600m to the capital programme if the share sale didn't go ahead.

Projects in the capital programme included:

- Major initiatives: Cycleways programme, social housing upgrades, Golden Mile, City Streets programme, future provision for community new and upgraded community facilities
- Community or facility upgrades: Begonia House, Bond Store, Grenada Sports Hub, Khandallah pool, Newtown community hub, Otari landscape plan, venues upgrades
- Infrastructure upgrades: retaining wall upgrades, pre-sale preparations, footpath upgrades, LED streetlight transition, speed management and parking upgrades,
- Services improvements: rubbish collection bin changes, library collections upgrades, zoo masterplan

Thanks  
Kate

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch  
**The Department of Internal Affairs** Te Tari Taiwhenua  
Mobile: 9(2)(a) | Email: [x@x](#)

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---

**From:** Fergus Broom <.@..>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 October 2024 1:20 pm  
**To:** Anthea Oliver <Anthea.Oliver@dia.govt.nz>; Kate Barnes <.@..>  
**Subject:** Service coverage

The question the min has is where the PR says "The council has a range of options available to it rather than reducing service coverage"

Questions what we're referring to when we say reducing service coverage

However, this is probably less urgent than it was as that aspect of the PR has now been removed. But would be good to get an answer on this please. Thanks



### Fergus Broom

**Private Secretary Local Government** | Office of Hon Simeon Brown  
Minister for Energy, Minister of Local Government, Minister of Transport, Minister for Auckland, Member of Parliament for Pakuranga

M: 9(2)(a) | Website: [www.Beehive.govt.nz](http://www.Beehive.govt.nz)  
E: [x@x](#)  
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

## Document 15

**From:** [Kate Barnes](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#)  
**Subject:** updated timelines  
**Date:** Wednesday, 23 October 2024 12:11:08 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[Updated - Possible timelines for Cabinet process Wellington Crown Observer.docx](#)

---

Hi Fergus,

Sorry for the delay – please see attached updated timelines for intervention. Bit messy due to the multiple decision points. These options have all been drafted on the assumption that MO can get approval for late lodgement.

Happy to chat if needed.

Thanks

Kate

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

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## Document 17

**From:** [Kate Barnes](#)  
**To:** [Fergus Broom](#)  
**Subject:** RE: updated timelines  
**Date:** Wednesday, 23 October 2024 1:17:27 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)

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Re: gazette timing

The Gazette office accepts urgent requests on a case-by-case basis (their discretion) but makes no promises as to turnaround times.

We can submit the notice ahead of time, requesting a publish date/time the afternoon following Cabinet. If the ToR and appointment is not approved, we can cancel the notice or put it on hold.

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

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---

**From:** Kate Barnes  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 October 2024 12:11 pm  
**To:** Fergus Broom <.@..>  
**Subject:** updated timelines

Hi Fergus,

Sorry for the delay – please see attached updated timelines for intervention. Bit messy due to the multiple decision points. These options have all been drafted on the assumption that MO can get approval for late lodgement.

Happy to chat if needed.

Thanks

Kate

**Kate Barnes** ([she/her](#)) | Senior Policy Analyst | Operational Policy | Ue te Hinātore - Local Government Branch

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