

11 December 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-33162

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information

We refer to your request for information dated 13 November 2024, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 13 November 2024. You have requested the following:

“Please supply a table or similar format showing a breakdown of financial outgoings (and income if any) summarised over the past five years, in respect of the following:

Legal advice, work, representation or any other law-related matters, inc meetings and agreements, whether formal or not, identified as connected with the following law firms and their contractors, consultants and other partners/associates (please identify which entity the amount relates to):

- *Buddle Findlay*
- *Dentons*
- *Crown Law*

Please also provide the same breakdown for any such costs/income from any inhouse provision (if this is too small an amount to provide without risks to confidentiality, please supply totals for the five years).”

Greater Wellington’s response follows:

In relation to the first part of your request, the following is a table of the annual legal costs incurred by Greater Wellington for the provision of legal services of any type by Buddle Findlay and Dentons.

Firm	2020	2021*	2021*	2022	2023	2024	Total
Dentons	67,438.97	196,400.95	10,513.02	72,579.01	105,404.09	46,931.52	499,267.56
Buddle Findlay	63,338.55	190,474.78	-	198,773.11	226,771.30	275,463.77	954,821.51
Grand Total	130,777.52	386,875.73	10,513.02	271,352.12	332,175.39	322,395.29	1,457,089.07

* NB There are two amounts listed for 2011 as these amounts represent information from two financial systems with the changeover occurring mid-2021.

In relation to the above information Greater Wellington's financial system only keeps records of the amounts spent on 'legal fees' as paid on invoices provided to us by the legal firms and recorded as such within the financial system (i.e. coded correctly). This means that it will include the cost of any formal or informal legal or associated work undertaken by these firms (and any associated parties, sub-contractors or agents) on Greater Wellington's behalf and on-charged to Greater Wellington. However, as it is the compilation of amounts paid globally on an invoice and coded as 'legal fees', Greater Wellington will not be able to break such amounts down to matters on which advice was provided, or the type of work undertaken (i.e. written advice or meetings), or who provided the advice or undertook the work (i.e. the firm or a consultant to that firm).

As Greater Wellington is a local government organisation and not central government or the Crown, it is unable to use the services of Crown Law. Accordingly, we advise that there were no financial outgoings associated with the provision of legal services by Crown Law and your request for information is accordingly refused under section 17(g)(i) of the Local Government and Official Information Act 1987 (the Act) on the grounds that we do not hold the information and have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another local authority, department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Greater Wellington does not generate any income in relation to the provision of legal services. Accordingly, your request for information is refused under section 17(g)(i) of the Act on the grounds that we do not hold the information and have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another local authority, department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

We separately requested a clarification of the second part of your request relating to the in-house provision of legal advice via email on 22 November 2024. In that email we asked:

So that we can best provide the information you are requesting, we need to understand what you mean by 'in-house' provision. Do you mean secondment of personnel from the mentioned external firms or organisations, or do you mean the cost associated with the in-house employment of legal counsel by Greater Wellington, which would be generalised salary cost information as Greater Wellington does not require its in-house legal team to track its time?

We also advised that if you did not respond to the request for clarification, we may either extend the time for a response or respond to the question as it stands. As you have not responded to that email, we have opted to respond to your request as it stands. On that basis, we have not entered into any secondment arrangements with any of the above firms and, therefore, we have not incurred any 'in-house' costs associated with any of the above organisations. Accordingly, your request for information is refused under section 17(g)(i) of the Act on the grounds that we do not hold the information and have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another local authority, department, Minister of the Crown or organisation. If this does not answer your question, you are able to issue a revised request for information.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where appropriate. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Julie Knauf

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Ratonga Rangapū | Group Manager, Corporate Services