



Report 05.658
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Committee Planning and Monitoring Subcommittee
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Communications Strategy 2006 - 09

1. Purpose

To outline the process for reviewing Greater Wellington's communications strategy.

To recommend a high-level direction for agreement as the basis for developing the 2006 – 09 communications strategy.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Greater Wellington's existing communication strategy (Attachment One) was adopted in June 2003 for the period 2003 – 2006. During workshops on the LTCCP 2006 – 16 Councillors indicated that they wished to review the communication strategy in parallel with their discussions on the LTCCP with a view to having a draft for discussion in February 2006.

David Benham has agreed to sponsor this review, with support from John Allard.

3.1 Process

In order to develop a draft strategy by February 2006 officers have established the following process.

- i. December 2005 - identify options for the high-level direction or purpose of the strategy and present them to the Planning and Monitoring Subcommittee and the Policy Finance and Strategy Committee for discussion and approval.

- ii. December 2005 – January 2006, carry out a stock take of communications activities across the organisation.
- iii. Late December 2005 / January 2006 - develop measurable outcomes that will achieve the purpose of the strategy and programmes and tools to deliver these outcomes. Present to Council in late January / early February 2006.

4. Comment

The first step in developing this strategy is to agree on its direction. Once the direction is agreed officers can identify and develop measurable outcomes and appropriate tools to achieve the specified ends.

By direction, what officers are proposing at this stage is not a formal written statement (that will be a later development), but an indication of the overall purpose to which the Council wishes its communications effort to be directed.

The direction should strongly reflect and support the overall purpose of Greater Wellington and the long-term outcomes it seeks to achieve. This is the situation with the current communications strategy which is designed to support the LTCCP framework of ‘working toward a more sustainable region’.

Councillors have indicated that they wish to continue with the existing direction in the next LTCCP, and generally maintain the existing mix of services. The three options proposed for the future direction reflect that view.

4.1 Current direction

The current direction is focused on:

- increasing public awareness and understanding of sustainability, and
- influencing the public to change behaviour to support a more sustainable region.

An outcome of this approach is the development of partnerships and collaboration with the community, private sector and government, and developing a positive perception of the organisation.

The existing direction was established by Councillors through workshops in 2002 / 03. The discussions reached the following general conclusions:

- Communications activity and resources should not be focused on promoting the Council; instead they should focus on promoting the overall strategic outcome (a more sustainable region). It was felt that Greater Wellington would achieve positive image as a result of being seen to promote an outcome that was widely supported by the public.
- Greater Wellington’s lack of engagement with householders and urban areas was identified as a major gap in our programmes, and therefore

the major communication initiative (Be the Difference) focused on engaging individuals and the community in this area.

- The rebranding as Greater Wellington, adoption of the social marketing programme and focus on sustainability were all seen as contributing to medium or long-term outcomes for the organisation and community as a whole.
- The ongoing operational communications (Elements, media activity, radio, divisional promotions) were regarded as supporting the strategic communications programme (brand, social marketing and sustainability focus) as well as more generally raising awareness and understanding about the organisation and its contribution to a sustainable region.

This direction has now been in place for two and a half years (although the social marketing programme was launched less than two years ago, in February 2004). The results of survey research on progress to date are now available. The results are summarised in report 05.672.

4.2 Options

Options one and two are based on an assumption that the same or similar level of resourcing is available in the 2006 – 2009 period. Option three could be delivered at a lower cost to the community.

4.2.1 Option One - maintain the existing direction

The existing direction is focused on promoting increased understanding of sustainability and influencing individuals and households to act in ways that move us to being more sustainable.

Comment

Under this option it is likely we would continue something approximating the existing mix of Be the Difference advertising promotions and direct mail. The likely outcomes we would seek to achieve would be to substantially increase household membership from 12,300 households to around 20,000; grow awareness of Be the Difference and Greater Wellington's role in promoting sustainability.

Evaluation of the existing programme to date suggests we are having some success in achieving its aims. Public understanding of sustainability has increased, the public has a high-regard for Greater Wellington's role and the social marketing programme has been successful in raising understanding and initiating behaviour change among the 12,300 household members.

Where the strategy has not focused, for example, general awareness of Greater Wellington's activities, or promotion of the brand, we have not improved awareness among the general public.

Another issue to consider is that the existing programme focuses a large amount of resource on the 12,300 household members. Servicing this group

has resulted in substantial gains in awareness and learning, smaller gains in behaviour, as well as substantial improvements in the member group's perception of Greater Wellington. However, it means that we are somewhat limited in the amount of advertising and promotion we can undertake across the wider community.

4.2.2 Option two - modify existing direction to increase awareness and promotion of sustainability issues

This option would see Greater Wellington maintain its overall focus on increasing public understanding of sustainability, but would reduce the emphasis on influencing behaviour change

Comment

This option would mean more, higher profile promotion and publicity of key issues, probably within the framework of the existing Be the Difference programme. There would be less emphasis on direct mail packs with household members. The household programme would be maintained at a lower level of activity (greater use of electronic newsletters and lower cost mail packs), but would likely continue to grow slowly over time.

The likely outcomes we would seek to achieve would be higher awareness of Greater Wellington and particularly its role promoting a sustainable region; higher awareness of Be the Difference among the general public; continued engagement of the household membership to make changes in behaviour.

4.2.3 Option three – change direction and focus on promotion of sustainability or promotion of Greater Wellington and its activities

This option would see Greater Wellington focus on advertising and promotion of sustainability issues and/or its general activities.

Comment

This option would mean the Be the Difference household direct marketing programme would be wound up. The resources saved could be used to deliver more advertising and promotion through media, and more promotional marketing.

The likely outcomes we would seek to achieve would include higher awareness of Greater Wellington; higher understanding of our activities, and; greater understanding of sustainability issues.

If Council chose to use the savings from the household programme to reduce rate increases, the overall level of promotion would not change from its current state, and the outcomes would be consequently more modest.

5. **Communication**

No communications are recommended from this report.

6. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives** the report.*
2. ***Notes** the proposed process for review of Greater Wellington's communications strategy.*
3. *Recommends to the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee the adoption of one of the following options as the preferred direction for Greater Wellington's communications strategy 2006 – 2009, either:*
 - a. *Option One, maintain the existing direction;*
 - b. *Option Two, modify existing direction to increase awareness and promotion of sustainability issues, or;*
 - c. *Option Three, change direction and focus on promotion of sustainability and/or promotion of Greater Wellington and its activities.*

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