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Committee Council
Author Fran Wilde, Deputy Chair, WRS Committee
 Jane Davis Divisional Manager

Report on the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee meeting held on 14 October 2009

1. Purpose

To inform Council about the meeting of the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee that took place on 14 October 2009.

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. Report

3.1 Grow Wellington Annual Report

Grow Wellington Chair, Murray McCaw, and Chief Executive, Nigel Kirkpatrick, made a presentation to the committee on the company's highlights for the 2008/09 year. In doing so they acknowledged the quality of the Board appointed by Greater Wellington (via the committee) and the dedication of their staff.

Three "live case studies" made presentations to the committee on their growing businesses and the support they have received from Grow Wellington. Tristan Thompson of a new company called Kickstand, talked to the committee about his experience with Grow Wellington's Activate programme and Creative HQ's incubation programme. Kickstand provides online tutorials for the installation and maintenance of bike parts. Research undertaken by the company through the Grow Wellington programmes shows people will buy more products on-line if they have the knowledge to fit them. He told the committee he has a major bicycle distributor interested in signing a deal with them.

Bob Stuart, of Formway talked to the committee about his company's involvement with the proposed national Health, Education and Research Collaborative Centre (HERCC). Formway specialises in ergonomic office furniture, primarily chairs, and has the goal "to be the global leader in designing for people and their environment". Bob talked to the committee about the synergies and opportunities for his company in the medical research that will happen within the HERCC.

Finally Scott Houston of Kapiti-based ICT company Intergrid talked to the committee about his experience of Angel HQ and Grow Wellington's role in supporting a significant Hong Kong partnership development for his company.

The committee noted the importance of the region's tertiary education sector working together to support economic development innovations. The committee asked that it received future reporting on the relationships within this sector.

3.2 WRS Office Annual Report

Melanie Thornton, WRS Project Leader, highlighted to the committee the major achievements of the WRS Office for the 2008/09 year. Highlights included work in the following areas:

- genuine progress index
- regional broadband
- regional urban design
- regional open spaces
- industrial land
- Wellington Regional Labour Market Strategy (WRLMS).

The office also put significant effort into facilitating continued dialogue between the WRS partners, Central Government agencies and Grow Wellington to ensure alignment of work programmes.

The office hosted a Migrant and Refugee Employment project for the Ministry of Social Development. This was a one year project aimed at getting at least 50 skilled migrants/refugees into self employment or permanent Council positions. The project was fully funded by the Ministry.

A Wellington Regional Strategy summit was held in late 2008 which brought community and business leaders together to review economic development in the region and share information about the activities underway under the WRS.

3.3 Broadband

The committee was updated on the Government's plans for the roll-out of ultrafast broadband around the country. On 16 September Minister Steven Joyce confirmed the final details of what is now known as the Ultra-Fast Broadband Initiative (UFBI)¹ and on 29 September a draft of the Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI). These are very consistent with our own plans for broadband in the region.

The total quantum of government investment over the next few years is \$1.5b for urban and \$48m for rural, with an expectation there will be significant matching investment from the private sector, and some redeployment of funding collected under the Telecommunications Service Obligation².

In the UFBI, there will be a regional approach. In our region the areas are the four cities, Masterton, and Kapiti. The business model for Local Fibre Companies (LFCs) has been refined from previously discussed models, to allow for "lit" services to be offered as a product as well as dark fibre.

The overall objective is to accelerate the roll-out of ultra-fast broadband to almost 80% percent³ of the New Zealand population over ten years, concentrating in the first six years on priority broadband users such as businesses, schools and health services, plus greenfield developments and certain tranches of residential areas.

3.4 Wellington Regional Labour Market Strategy (WRLMS)

Lindsey Scott, Regional Director, Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Mel Harrington, Regional Labour Market Manager, MSD talked to the committee about the activities happening under the WRLMS and in the regional labour market generally. They presented some statistics that showed household labour market participation was higher in the Wellington region than elsewhere in New Zealand. They also talked about the impact of the recession on unemployment and the challenges associated with the tightening labour market.

Mel outlined five major initiatives the government has embarked on recently, including:

- The Community Max and Job Opportunities initiatives (in response to the recession)
- Trade Academies
- Service Academies (military)
- Youth Guarantee Scheme

¹ was formerly the Broadband Investment Initiative or BII.

² the total project funding for urban and rural would therefore be in the order of \$4.5b and \$300m respectively.

³ represented by all urban areas greater than about 9,500 population – previously the cut-off was a little higher resulting in 75% coverage.

- Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-15.

Linda Sissons, from WelTec, is leading the skills workstream of the WRLMS. She told the committee about the positive effect the recession has had on trade education, with providers now working a lot more collaboratively. In particular she said that there is good co-operation between Grow Wellington, MSD and employers alongside the trade education organisations.

3.5 Wellington Region Open Space Strategy and Action Plan

The committee approved the Wellington Region Open Space Strategy and Action Plan. The plan fits under the “good regional form” focus area of the WRS, which recognises the importance of the physical arrangements of rural and urban communities and their contribution to a good quality of life.

The main aim of the regional open space strategy and action plan is to guide collaborative planning for the public open space network in the Wellington region. Eight work-streams and sub-actions under each of these work-streams are included in the action plan. These are the priority areas that open space providers and strategy implementation partners in the Wellington region intend to take over the next 1-3 years (2009-2012). Greater Wellington’s regional parks review work is part of this regional collaborative approach.

4. Recommendations

That the Council:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

Report prepared by:

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Fran Wilde
Chair, Greater Wellington

Jane Davis
Divisional Manager, Regional Strategy

Attachment 1: Unconfirmed Public Minutes