



Report 11.18
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Committee Wellington Regional Strategy Committee
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WRS Office Update

1. Purpose

This report is to provide the Committee with an update on activities of the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) Office since the last report to the Committee in November 2010.

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

Since November 2010 the main areas of work for the Wellington Regional Strategy Office have been:

- Working with the WRS Review team.
- Refining and updating indicators for the Genuine Progress Index (GPI) report and establishing software to host the GPI online.
- Hosting and participating in the regional Broadband Operational Group (BOG), and working with Chorus and CityLink on the Broadband project.
- Developing the new WRS website.
- Facilitating the regional urban design working group and continuing to progress the work outlined in the Wellington Region Urban Design Action Plan and Stocktake.

4. WRS Review

The WRS Review team has drafted a business survey and met with the Senior Offices Resource Team (SORT) to receive feedback on it. The survey will be sent to businesses from Grow Wellington's database.

The team has also been undertaking work on the case studies. The case studies are the Centres of Excellence programme being undertaken by Grow Wellington, the Broadband project, and two Good Regional Form projects, “Strong CBD and sub-regional centres” and “Regional Focus Areas”. Information has been received from each of the councils on the level of support they have given to WRS projects by way of staff resources and additional funding.

Contact has been made with the newly elected mayors who wanted to be interviewed and nearly all of the other interviews have been completed.

The Review team is expected to deliver its first findings to the WRS Committee on 29 March 2011.

5. Genuine Progress Index

The Genuine Progress Index working group has spent some time researching and refining indicators for the Genuine Progress Index.

A meeting was held with Treasury in January 2011 to discuss full cost accounting. We were interested to hear their view on how useful Treasury finds full cost accounting for policy and strategy development. The time it takes to understand the full cost accounting language was identified as a potential barrier to realising the full potential of full-cost accounts and how they may be utilised. Treasury also said that to be useful in relation to the region’s GPI, the accounts need to relate to issues of concern to the region and be connected to the kinds of measures we have within the GPI. We were reassured that Treasury believes there is value in undertaking full cost accounts.

An invitation to submit proposals to undertake two full-cost accounts has been sent to a number of selected organisations with relevant expertise. These full-cost accounts are the cost of inactivity in the Wellington region and the cost of income inequality in the Wellington region.

The cost of inactivity was chosen as a full-cost account because a wide range of chronic diseases could be avoided through increased levels of physical activity in the population. Since the need and demand for medical services and their associated costs are directly linked to the prevalence of illness in society, a reduction in chronic ailments through higher levels of physical activity has the potential to reduce health care costs. Assessing the full costs of physical inactivity provides a yardstick against which to measure the costs and benefits of various measures that may increase physical activity.

The cost of income inequality as a full-cost account was chosen for a few reasons. There is new evidence that shows that large income inequalities within societies damage the social fabric and quality of life for everyone, with many of the most pressing health and social problems being worse in more unequal societies. Greater equity is therefore considered as a means of improving quality of life. For this reason, the income inequality indicator in the Wellington region’s GPI has been selected as an important indicator for the development of a full cost account.

It is expected that a contract to complete the full-cost accounts will commence in early March 2011. An update on the full-cost accounts will be made at a GPI workshop to be held with the WRS Committee following the meeting on 29 March 2011.

Development of the website for the GPI continues. We will show this at the workshop on 29 March 2011.

6. WRS Summit

The WRS Summit was initially scheduled for November 2010. However, due to clashes with the local body elections, it was decided to postpone the Summit until early 2011.

Following a meeting with the Senior Officers Resource Team (SORT), it was decided that we will delay the Summit until after the WRS Review has been completed so that an appropriate topic can be chosen.

7. Urban Design

The Urban Design working group is working with the Ministry for the Environment, Local Government New Zealand and Victoria University to explore urban design training opportunities for council staff and councillors across the region.

The third 'walk and talk' session will be hosted by Kapiti Coast District Council on 11 February. Officers will discuss key urban design issues and examples of best practice.

8. Open Spaces

In conjunction with the New Zealand Recreation Association, the second officers' Open Spaces Forum will be held on Tuesday 15th February. This forum will bring together open space practitioners, managers and rangers from across the region. The main aim of the forum is to explore best practices, and explore common issues and ideas from across the region.

Work is continuing on the biodiversity and walking track portals. These will be displayed on the new WRS website when the site goes live.

9. WRS website

The new WRS website is under development and is expected to be operational by early March 2011.

10. Communication

Communication on matters relating to the workstreams above will happen as relevant information is identified.

11. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

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