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Committee Risk and Assurance Committee
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Report on Awareness Survey 2014

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the results of the 2014 Awareness Survey carried out by Versus Research,

2. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report as it is for information purposes.

3. Background

In May/June this year (2014) Versus Research was commissioned to conduct a review of residents' awareness of the Wellington Regional Council and the impression they have of the regional council overall. The survey was a repeat study of research done in April 2013 and 2012.

Interviews were carried out via telephone, with a final sample size of 622 (Margin of error +/- 3.93%). The project utilised a stratified sample based on the districts that make up the Wellington region.

To ensure the sample proportions were achieved, quotas were applied. Age and gender weightings were applied to the final data set to ensure specific demographic groups are not under or over represented and that each group was represented as it would be in the population.

The survey asked residents about their awareness, understanding and perceived value-add of the regional council's role, the contact they have had with the regional council, the service they have received from the regional council, as well as the awareness and readership of the regional council publication 'Our Region' and use of media.

Residents' attitudes towards the regional council using social media and usage/behaviour around online platforms were measured, as was civil defence emergency preparedness. This year we included questions on public transport.

In the past, the same questions have been included in a NZTA survey but they were dropped by NZTA this year.

4. Results

4.1 Awareness and understanding of the Regional Council's role

Whilst total awareness and understanding of the regional council's activities (a combination of prompted (aided) and unprompted (unaided) awareness) was more positive than in 2013, unprompted awareness reverted back to previous levels.

There was also an increased level of misattribution of local council activities to the regional council at an unprompted level, including library services, roading and footpaths, swimming pools, playgrounds, sewage, rubbish, parking, waste and stormwater.

4.2 Unprompted

The raised awareness of regional council activities (unprompted) in 2013 was not sustained in 2014, with levels reverting back to those seen in 2012. Eighty-two per cent of residents were aware of at least one Council activity.

Significant declines in unprompted awareness were measured for 17 of the 23 Council services, with the greatest declines in water supply (down 13 percentage points to 40%) and water quality (down 16 percentage points to 34%). Unprompted awareness of public transport and flood control both declined by seven percentage points to 27% and 15% respectively.

Awareness of Council's role in managing regional parks (unprompted) increased marginally to 30%, up four percentage points. All other services received fewer than 10% mention.

4.3 Total Awareness

When combined (prompted and unprompted) the story is a lot more positive. Total awareness revealed a significant increase for 13 of the 23 Council activities, while seven remained comparably static over 2013 and 2012. This was supported by a considerable decrease in the number of residents who were not aware of any Council activities (down seven percentage points to 18%).

The increase in awareness indicated a significant gain over time for the management of native plants and animals (up 13 percentage points to 73%). In comparison, the other gains were a return to awareness levels measured in 2012.

Total awareness of managing regional parks increased by 14 percentage points (from 74% to 88%), which compares favourably with the 2012 level of 87%. Water quality and supply remained consistent at 87% and 85% respectively, while public transport increased eight percentage points to 82% (compared to 74% in 2013 and 79% in 2012).

Flood control increased by eight percentage points (to 76%), civil defence up nine percentage points (to 72%), and the biggest increases were resource

consents (up 19 percentage points to 71%), policy development (up 15 percentage points to 65%), walking and cycling info online (up 12 percentage points to 50%) and Wairarapa Water Use Project (up 13 percentage points to 33%).

When asked whether respondents understand the regional council's decision-making process, responses remain mixed. A total of 12% agreed they understood (compared to 13% in 2013 and 9% in 2012), 43% were neutral (compared with 38% in 2013 and 47% in 2012) but 43% disagreed they understood the process (compared with 45% in 2013 and 40% in 2012).

Responses to having a greater say in decision-making and confidence in the regional council's decision-making remain on a par with the last two years. Around a fifth of residents (19%) are satisfied with opportunities to participate in the regional council's decision-making (compared to 18% in 2013) while 47% are neutral (compared to 45% in 2013). The percentage responding that they 'don't know' decreased from 4% to 2%. When asked if respondents have confidence in council decision-making being in the region's best interest, the number who did not have confidence reduced from 15% in 2013 to 11% in 2014.

Positive perceptions regarding the value add of the regional council's rates spend remain similar to 2013, with around one quarter (27%) rating the regional council rates as 'good value', compared to 26% in 2013 and 39% in 2012.

Overall satisfaction with the regional council remains on a par with 2013 and 2012, with a total of 61% of residents either satisfied (51%) or very satisfied (10%) with the services they get from the regional council (compared with 62% in 2013 and 60% in 2012).

5. Contact and service from the Regional Council

Contact with the regional council decreased by 12 percentage points in 2014, with 22% having contacted the regional council in the last 12 months, down from 34% in 2013. However, when asked to rate the overall performance of the regional council staff, a significantly greater proportion indicated they had received 'good' services (59% compared to 40% in 2013).

Lack of response and follow up continued to be the main drivers of dissatisfaction with the regional council staff. There continues to be confusion between activities delivered by the regional council and local council.

6. Communications

Newspapers continue to be the main source of information about the regional council for almost half (46%) of the region's residents, down from 52% in 2013 (unprompted). However more people are getting their information online (up 10 percentage points to 30%).

At a prompted level, the number of residents gaining information from rates bills remained relatively unchanged at 57% (compared to 58% in 2013). The

Metlink website returned to 2012 levels (55% compared to 56% in 2012 and 39% in 2013) and the GWRC website increased six percentage points to 38%.

Awareness of the GWRC Facebook remained steady at 10% (compared to 9% in 2013), and for the first time awareness of the WREMO Facebook was measured, coming in at 10% also.

The proportion of residents who were unaware of any regional council publication declined considerably from 13% in 2013 to seven percent in 2014.

When asked specifically about Our Region, 52% of residents indicated that they read the publication (up from 44% in 2013), with the number who said they had never seen it decreasing 13 percentage points (from 38% to 25%). However awareness that Our Region is produced by the regional council remained on a par with last year (31% in 2014 compared to 32% in 2013).

6.1 Traditional media

Analysis of traditional media use shows a significant increase in community newspaper readership, with 33% of greater Wellington residents getting news from community papers (up from 25% in 2013). Dominion Post readership remained similar at 65% (compared to 68% in 2013).

Residents continue to listen to a wide range of radio stations. National Radio still holds a quarter market share of listeners at 25% (down from 27% in 2013). There were increases in listenership for The Rock (13%, up from 10% in 2013), The Hits (9%, up from 5% in 2013), and The Sound (8%, up from 5% in 2013).

6.2 Online Services

Access to the internet increased significantly to 95% (up from 89% in 2013), and the number of people accessing the GWRC website rose to 47% (up from 43% in 2013). Accessing information regarding parks and reserves was the main reason for visiting the Council website for 26% of residents (up 11 percentage points compared to 2013). However there was a decline in people looking for regulations, by-laws and requirements at 12% (down from 25% in 2013); information on facilities at 2% (down from 20%); activity programmes at 4% (down from 12%) and public transport at 3% (down from 11%).

When rating the regional council's website, residents who rated the site as 'poor' decreased to 2% (down from 5% in 2013), while those who gave it a 'neutral' rating stayed the same as in 2013, with 52%. There was an increase of people rating the website as 'good' (38% compared to 31% in 2013), while 8% did not give an opinion (down from 12% in 2013).

Residents who use the website were asked to suggest changes that could improve the site. Improvements included a better search facility (24%, down from 46% in 2013) and more attractive and better design (16%, up from 9% in 2013).

Residents who have access to the website were asked whether they were members of Facebook or Twitter. Membership to Facebook rose significantly

(60% compared with 56% in 2013) and the use of Twitter remains on par with last year (6% across both years). The number of people who would use Facebook or Twitter for information on public transport disruptions and service changes rose nine percentage points to 53% (compared to 44% in 2013) and more than two thirds of residents(67%) are likely to follow civil defence announcements through social media (compared to 61% in 2013).

7. Public Transport

Measured for the first time this year, 74% of residents indicated they had used the public transport network in the last 12 months. In terms of frequency, 22% of users were using public transport five or more times a week, with a further 16% accessing the network between two and four times a week.

8. Community Participation

This year residents were again asked to indicate whether they have sufficient emergency food and water available to last three days. The majority of residents (85%, up from 81% in 2013) said that they did, with Wellington City residents being most prepared at 90% (up from 78% in 2013). Least prepared are Carterton residents at 79%, and Kapiti Coast and Porirua residents (each at 80%).

A total of 75% of residents undertook some action to save water, which is on par with the 76% of residents in 2013, with more people not leaving taps running (16% compared to 8% in 2013), checking for leaks and changing taps (11% compared to 3% in 2013), and using/catching rain water (13% compared to 11% in 2013). However, less people are limiting outside water use (20% compared to 38% in 2013) and using grey water (5% compared to 15%).

9. Conclusion

Versus has suggested several points that Wellington Regional Council should consider in future communications planning.

These include:

- Continued communication of regional responsibilities to minimise misattribution of responsibility
- Targeted communication with young and non-ratepayer audiences using the public transport network
- Use of traditional media to target community interest
- Take advantage of increased online and social media use.

10. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

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