Report   08.754
Date   13 October 2008
File   WRS/09/01/01

Committee   Wellington Regional Strategy Committee
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WRS Office Update

1.   Purpose

To inform the WRS Committee of activities of the office and council-led projects.

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.   WRS Office Update

3.1   Work Programme

Since 13 August the WRS Office has had its major focus on GPI, Broadband, Urban Design and resourcing of WRS council-led projects.

3.2   Genuine Progress Index

A separate report has been tabled on this.

3.3   Broadband

A Wellington Region Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Broadband Investment Fund was submitted on 30 September. Our "investment partners", Smartlinx 3 and CityLink, co-signed the EOI document. An application has also been made for funding assistance for full bid development of $100,000 and $90,000 for urban and rural respectively.

It is expected that the if the EOI is successful, we will hear in the last week of October that we can proceed with a full application, at which time the Minister may identify some "front runners" for funding. No funding commitments are expected prior to the General Election.

A potential change in government following the General Election may change the nature of the Broadband Investment Fund. The Broadband Operating Group will continue setting up the structures and policies needed to move the Wellington region broadband project forward under the current fund "rules". Any changes to the fund will be responded to if and when those changes arise.

Six workstreams are now underway, some with very tight timeframes (working towards the application date of 28 February 2009).

3.3.1 Business Case

A business case to support the final application is being developed. Initial work has been completed on this as part of the EOI process. This included a stocktake of the region's broadband infrastructure and services.

3.3.2 Regional Broadband Plan

A Regional Broadband Plan is being prepared. It will explicitly set out the region's goals for broadband and will support the final application. The plan will be presented to the December meeting of the Committee for adoption.

3.3.3 Broadband Uptake Strategy

Grow Wellington is responsible for growing the uptake of broadband in the region. Council officers are working with Grow Wellington to prepare a strategy that outlines how the uptake of broadband, especially to support economic growth, will be achieved.

3.3.4 Establishment of Wellington Region Broadband Company

The EOI outlined that a council-owned company would be established to manage Wellington regional broadband development. All the region's territorial authorities would be represented by the company which would be a joint Council Controlled Organisation.

A project has been set up to progress the establishment of this entity. Each of the Councils will be involved with this work. Council officers are to schedule a workshop for the Mayors and Chief Executives to discuss governance and ownership arrangements in early November which will be followed by discussions with each Council in late November / early December.

3.3.5 Broadband Investment Fund Application

The application itself will be prepared over the next 3 months. This will need to receive the support of the Committee in early February, as well as the sign-off by the Councils and "investment partners".

3.3.6 Review of Planning Controls and Use of Council Assets

It was agreed at the Chief Executive's meeting on 10 October that council officers will develop a common policy position on the use of existing council assets and deployment technologies such as shallow trenching. This is on the

basis that they are used for open access infrastructure. The New Zealand Transit Agency (State Highway managers) and OnTrack will also be invited to discuss options for enabling cheaper and faster deployment methods.

In addition, policy changes to facilitate new infrastructure may be needed. Officers will investigate the feasibility of consistent resource management rules for telecommunications infrastructure throughout the region, such as better aligned processes and conditions for greenfield and brownfield developments.

3.4   Urban Design

In September the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) released a discussion paper: "*Building Sustainable Urban Communities – A discussion document exploring place-based approaches to sustainable urban development in New Zealand*". The paper outlines options to help achieve better urban development. Some of the options explored in the paper have implications for councils, both in the way they plan for urban development and how they undertake development themselves (or could act as a developer).

The discussion paper has been prepared by the Sustainable Urban Development Unit, Department of Internal Affairs and follows work previously carried out by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Senior Officer Resource Team (SORT) was involved in discussions with officials in the early stages of the project.

A number of options have been explored in the discussion paper including:

- The role of government in urban development

- Improving co-ordination and integration

- Funding

- Land assembly

- Streamlining planning processes

- Housing supply, choice and affordability

SORT is working with the Chief Executives to prepare a response from the region on the paper. We anticipate a final draft being presented to the Committee for approval at the 10 December meeting.

3.5   WRS Summit

Invitations have gone out for the WRS Summit to be held on 14 November 2008 at the Chaffers Dock Atrium. In previous years this gathering was called the Strategic Partners Forum. It is a chance to give an update on progress on the Wellington Regional Strategy and to create an opportunity for attendees to explore key issues and opportunities facing the region. It is anticipated that 100 people will be attending.

The growing concerns about the current global economic conditions, and the potential for these conditions to worsen, the summit will provide a very timely opportunity for regional leaders to discuss this region's response.

An outline of the agenda for the summit is in **Attachment 1**.

4. WRS Resourcing

Resourcing of WRS council-led projects has been identified as an issue by members of SORT. IT appears that for a number of the region's councils providing on-going resources to progress WRS projects has been difficult.

The following projects have been identified by SORT as having regional significance and need commitment regionally to progress them:

- Genuine Progress Index

- Broadband

- Urban Design

- Industrial Land

- Rural/Residential Development

- Open spaces

These projects are being led by various senior officers from the councils around the region. The Chief Executives have considered several options relating to the resourcing issue and have agreed to find additional resources to fund projects their councils are responsible for.

As agreed by the Chief Executives, the following projects are to be handled in a slightly different way than previously envisaged. A forum for sharing knowledge and experience will be established for each project so that councils can inform each other about how their work reflects the WRS principles and what best practice in these areas might look like.

- Centres/Big box retail

- Affordable housing

- Integrated transport and land use

- Sub-division code of practice

- Intensification

5.   Communication

Projects and other activities will continue to be communicated as the opportunity arises.

6.   Recommendations

That the Committee:

1.   **Receives** *the report.*

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

Report prepared by: Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: WRS Summit Agenda