Project title: E-Community Initiatives
Strategy area: Social and Recreation

1.   The Proposal

This proposal focuses on implementing the e-Community component of the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy. This policy is currently in a draft format and is being presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC) on 16 February 2006 to be signed-off for the purposes of public consultation.

The e-Community component of the ICT Policy establishes the Council's ongoing role in an e-Community programme. A significant aim of this policy is for new initiatives to be established on the basis of cost-sharing through partnerships with not for profit groups, the private and philanthropic sector and central government. Of particular note is the "Community Partnership Fund" established under the government's Digital Strategy. This fund offers seed funding to e-Community initiatives that are based on partnerships and supported by agreed ICT policies (i.e. sustainable funding is attached).

This proposal enables full implementation of the new e-Community Policy, which includes:
- continuing to provide a grant to the Wellington Region 2020 Communications Trust (W2020)[1]
- continuing to fund the three computer hubs in Newtown[2]
- funding a "Community ICT Coordinator" position
- funding two computer rooms in the Council's based in the Newtown Park and Arlington housing complexes
- funding up to four additional computer hubs placed in different parts of the city (if the two new housing computer rooms are proven successful).

2.   Strategic Fit

The proposal fits with the following strategic priority:

Priority 15   The Council will build capability and capacity within the community to promote social cohesion and sound social infrastructure.

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[1] W2020 was created in April 2002. Its main objective is "to empower all citizens of the Wellington region by ICT, and strengthen their communities through full participation in the information society." Prior to W2020's creation, community ICT initiatives in Wellington were run by the 2020 Communications Trust, which has now been superseded by both W2020 and a new National 2020 Trust, which now carries out national projects.

[2] The hubs provide free access to computers and the internet as well as free training programmes. The hubs are located in the Pacific Island Network Centre (10 computers), Newtown Community and Cultural Centre (six computers), and the Newtown Library (three computers, without internet access).

3.   Relationship to Exisiting Activities

This proposal builds on the current funding the Council has allocated to e-Community initiatives through Project C592: Community Computing. This is funded at $223,500 for the following initiatives:

- three community computing hubs in Newtown ($78,500)
- a grant for W2020 ($145,000), which runs the Wellington Community Network on the Council's behalf, provides advice on community ICT and implements projects to install hubs and other e-Community initiatives.

This proposal would fully implement the e-Community component of the Council's ICT Policy.

4.   Proposal Costs

New Funding - Operational

Outline project costs per year										
	Operating expenses $000									
Project Component	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Housing*	80	65	65	80	65	65	80	65	65	80
ICT Coordinator	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
Hubs			76	114	152	209	171	180	199	180
Total	150	135	211	264	287	344	321	315	334	330

* See information in section 5 regarding an application being made to the government's Community Partnership Fund for potential cost sharing for this project.

New Funding - Capital

Outline project costs per year										
	Capital expenses $000									
Project Component	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Housing	45	-	-	27	-	18	27	-	-	27
Total	45	-	-	27	-	18	27	-	-	27

Existing Funding

Outline project costs per year										
	Operating expenses $000									
Project Component	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
W2020*	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145
Smart Newtown Hubs*	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5
Total	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5	223.5
	Total – New and Existing Operational Funding									
	373.5	337	434.5	487.5	510.5	567.5	544.5	538.5	557.5	553.5

* Ongoing funding for both of these projects from 2007/08 is subject to a review to be undertaken in early 2007.

5. Project Outline

The proposal provides for the continuation of the Council's support for W2020's work and the operation of the three computer hubs in Newtown (which continue to be successful). Added to this, the Council would implement the e-Community component of the policy by funding:

- computer rooms in two housing complexes (which will operate in partnership arrangements with a number of Wellington businesses – the cost-sharing parts of these arrangements have been reflected in the above costs)

- a Community ICT Coordinator role, which is critical to ensuring the Council's implementation of the e-Community Policy is coordinated (currently the responsibilities for this area are divided between the Libraries and Housing business units). Such a person will:
    - bring cohesion to the Council's e-Community policy – by leading the strategic/management overview of the community computing initiatives
    - establish a City ICT community computing network
    - be the main point of contact for business and other partners, developing and maintaining these relationships, particularly with central government agencies (e.g. the Community Employment Group), businesses (e.g. both current partners such as Fujitsu and potential new partners) and community organisations (e.g. W2020)
    - maintain a management overview of W2020, Smart Newtown's three hubs and the new Housing computer rooms
    - project manage and oversee future programmes, ensuring they are properly resourced, and seeing them through their development, implementation and ongoing operational phases
    - seek sponsorship
    - be accountable for the Council's community ICT budget
    - provide expertise, advice and support to community groups in the process of establishing community ICT projects.

- additional computer hubs rolled out for other areas of identified need in Wellington. Options for these computer hubs are:
    - hubs similar to those implemented in the Smart Newtown project and proposed for the Council housing complexes. Such hubs, however, would only be rolled out incrementally from 2008/09 once the housing computer rooms have been piloted, evaluated, and proven successful
    - provision of free access computers in public libraries. The National Library is currently leading a project which is looking at establishing a "People's Network" of computers throughout New Zealand. Access to the computers (including the internet) would be made freely available. The project will host an internet gateway which will specifically provide content focused on government e-services and other public information needs. Library team members will also be upskilled to support customers in successfully using the technology for searching (as necessary). The National Library has put in a bid for funding to the government's Community Partnership Fund for the first phase of the project. If this bid is successful, the Council may not need to implement independent community computing hubs.

Community Partnership Fund Application
An application has been submitted to the government's Community Partnership Fund to help share the cost of establishing the two Housing computer rooms. If the application for the full amount is approved, this will reduce the funding requested from the Council for 2006/07 by $65,000 ($45,000 capital, $20,000 operational). This application is predicated on establishing the computer rooms concurrently as this:
- reduces the technical costs associated with implementing the rooms (additional overheads would be applied if the rooms were set-up, and consequently upgraded, in different years)
- provides the best incentives for partners to be involved in the rooms.

If the Council's application is declined, however, the Council may wish to consider staggering the implementation of the rooms, in which case the costs for the rooms would be:

Outline project costs per year										
	Operating expenses $000									
Project Component	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Computer rooms	45	74.5	64	75	74	64	75	74	64	75

Outline project costs per year										
	Capital expenses $000									
Project Component	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Computer rooms	22.5	22.5	-	13.5	13.5	9	22.5	13.5		13.5

Deliverables for 2006-09
By 2009, this initiative will have delivered:
- the establishment and operation of two computer rooms in two of the Council's highest density housing complexes
- a Community ICT Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the Council's e-Community projects as well as providing support to community organisations undertaking e-Community initiatives
- potentially the establishment of a further computer hub in the next identified area of most need (probably either Kilbirnie or Lyall Bay).

Drivers for the proposal
The identified drivers for the project are:
- Council's agreement that its 1995 "InfoCity Strategy" be updated to an ICT Policy
- developing community capability and capacity by ensuring that those most disadvantaged do not miss out on the benefits that new technologies can provide – by being able to access and/or be trained in the use of those technologies.

Risks of postponing the proposal
Although the e-Community policy could still be part implemented through current funding, the Council risks missing opportunities to access funding available through the government's Community Partnership Fund.

The risks of staggering the establishment of the housing rooms over a two year period are:
- partners withdrawing from the initiative, as it provides fewer incentives for their participation
- loss of trust if the Council continues to consider establishing the rooms but is perceived as not making them operational.

Benefits
The potential high level benefits of the proposal are that Wellington's most disadvantaged groups will have access to new technologies and will be able to obtain competencies that:
- enable them to remain connected with mainstream information sources and services
- provide them with skills for improved employment opportunities
- enable them to be connected with communities both in New Zealand and globally.

Alternative options
Other more limited options for implementing the e-Community component of the ICT Policy have been considered:
- *Status Quo:* Continuation of funding for current projects, but no new projects implemented. Such an approach would enable the Council to meet its policy in part – but would not address the need to raise awareness around the benefits of ICT or address the disadvantage experienced by target communities in other parts of Wellington.

- *Moderate Implementation:* Some new projects would be prioritised to enable an increased implementation of the policy, for example, the roll-out of the two new computer rooms in Council's Newtown Park and Arlington flats complexes (because of the willingness of partners to significantly contribute to the establishment and operation of the rooms).

  The Community ICT Coordinator position would also be required as part of this implementation, as this person is critical to ensuring the Council's current and future work in this area is coordinated (i.e. project managing the implementation of the rooms and overseeing their ongoing operation). This person would also be able to liaise with community organisations and provide expertise and support for community-based ICT initiatives (i.e. by providing advice, help with funding applications, etc) as well as work at raising awareness of the benefits of ICT in communities.

  This option would require new funding (i.e. in addition to the funding currently set aside for the Smart Newtown hubs and W2020) as follows:

Activities	Budget
Community ICT Coordinator	$70,000
Housing computer rooms (two) – operational	$65,000-$81,000*
Total per year	**$135,000-$151,000**

* This amount changes depending on whether or not the computers need to be upgraded in the year. Capital funding for the costs of setting up the computer room, and their ongoing replacement, would be covered through capital funding in a three yearly cycle.

This option does enable the three proposed objectives of the policy to be addressed, although it limits the Council's ability to extend the implementation of the policy to other suburbs identified as areas of need.

6. Conclusion

e-Community initiatives develop the capability and capacity of communities and community groups, contributing to a city where all can participate in the benefits new technologies bring.

This proposal will implement the e-Community component of the ICT Policy, which is being considered by SPC for sign-off for the purposes of public consultation on 16 February 2006.