INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECNOLOGY POLICY

Wellington City Council

Contents

# SECTION 1: Overview

1.1   Introduction

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has already changed the way many Wellington residents live, work and play, and the Council believes it has further potential to enhance the lives of Wellingtonians.

ICT includes electronic information processing technologies such as computers and the internet (including email) as well as cellular, digital and wireless technologies and fixed line telecommunications. The Council believes these technologies have the ability to:

- enhance the city's economic development – by providing a telecommunications infrastructure that enables new opportunities for innovation, increased productivity and an enhanced quality of life

- contribute to the well-being of the community – by building capability and enabling individuals and communities to develop economically, socially, and culturally

- enhance and increase engagement in local democracy by enabling individuals and communities to be linked to local government and local networks.

The ICT Policy is divided into three separate, but interrelated, areas:
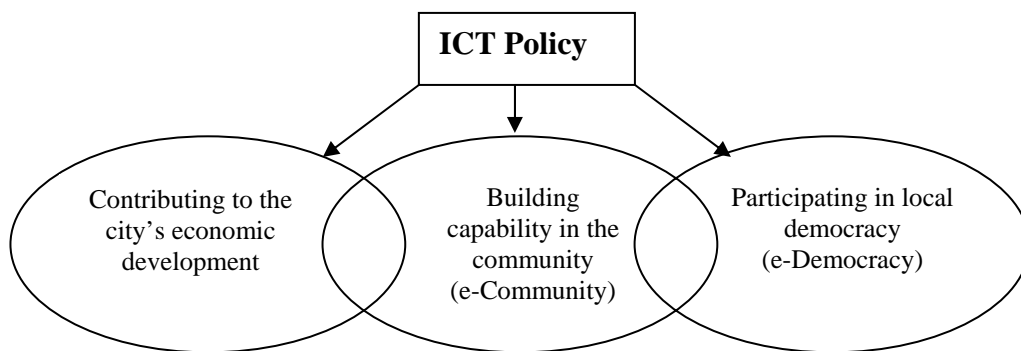
At this stage the Council is consulting on the draft e-Community and e-Democracy components of the policy. No date has been set for consulting on the economic development component, although we anticipate that this may be late in 2006.

The e-Community component of the policy focuses on ensuring that disadvantaged communities in Wellington do not miss out on the economic, social and cultural benefits that technologies can provide. Access to ICT, and the ability to use it, is increasingly critical for accessing information and resources. The e-Community component of the policy aims to ensure no one is excluded from the burgeoning "knowledge society" due to a lack of access or skills.

The e-Democracy component of the policy focuses on the opportunities technology presents for increasing citizen involvement and engagement in Council processes.

ICT has the potential to break down social, geographic, physical and economic barriers to participation as it makes information readily available and can provide new channels for dialogue between citizens and elected representatives. The e-Democracy component of the policy aims to enhance and increase participation in the Council's decision-making processes as well as provide efficient access to Council services.

The Council recognises that enabling access to and training in ICT through the e-Community component is critical to the e-Democracy programme being successful.

1.2   Why is the Council involved in ICT?

The Council has been involved in encouraging the deployment and use of ICT in Wellington City since 1995 when it first adopted its InfoCity Strategy.[1]

In 1995 the Council's involvement was based on the premise that it was uniquely situated to provide leadership to the business and community sectors in the take up and application of emerging technologies. The Council saw that emerging technologies provided it with new opportunities to:
- accelerate economic development
- enhance the achievement of social and community development principles
- provide a new "frontier" for business and community development.

ICT provides opportunities for the city's development – economically and socially, and is a useful tool for participation in civic decision-making processes.

The Council recognises that market gaps still exist – new technologies are not being deployed as quickly as might be desirable and the cost of technology has not sufficiently lowered to enable all businesses, communities and households to readily purchase ICT. A watching brief is being kept on how the government's recently announced regulatory changes (particularly local loop unbundling) will impact the city's broadband provision. Initiatives in this area are also being considered as part of the Wellington Regional Strategy and the development of the Council's policy will be seen in that context.

The Council is in a unique role – it can influence and bring together business and community sectors, while also being able to work closely with government agencies to achieve aims beneficial to all.

The Council's involvement in ICT builds on its commitment to the "Global Cities Dialogue" – through which the Council recognised that cities have a role in building a fair society and made a commitment to improving the quality of life and work of individuals, the quality and cost effectiveness of processes and services and ensuring effective progress towards sustainable development.

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[1] This Strategy resulted in the Council supporting a number of initiatives – including the CityLink CBD broadband roll-out, (e)-Vision, the creation of a Wellington City portal (W4), the establishment of the 2020 Communications Trust, the Smart Newtown pilot programme, the Wellington Community Network, and Computers for Communities programme.

1.3   Strategic Fit

The Council has been developing a new strategic direction for 2006-2016. A set of seven draft strategies have been developed that express the outcomes the Council wants to achieve for the city over the next 10 years. The outcomes are deemed to be key attributes that Wellington will need to demonstrate if it is to fulfil its "Creative Wellington – Innovative Capital" vision and establish and maintain a global competitive advantage into the future. The strategies also identify the areas that the Council wants to give specific priority to over the next three years.

The proposed strategies, outcomes, and strategic priorities that this policy contributes to are outlined in the policies below.

1.4   Links with other strategies

This policy has close links with the following strategies:

The Digital Strategy
The government's Digital Strategy looks at how ICT can be used to enhance all aspects of New Zealanders' lives. Through its strategy the government sends strong signals that local government will be an important partner in enabling it to meet some of the strategy's key outcomes. Most significantly, the government has established two new contestable seed funds that will be used to support such partnerships:
- the *Community Partnership Fund* – a fund to support grassroots initiatives that will build ICT skills in communities and regions, as well as help create distinctive New Zealand content online
- the *Broadband Challenge* – a fund to enable the roll-out of affordable broadband (high speed bandwidth) in the regions' centres, based on competitive open-access principles.

Strategic Plan for e-Local Government
The plan aims to enable New Zealand local government to be a world leader in e-local government. The plan focuses on how:
- access to local government information and services can be made easier
- participation in local government democracy can be increased
- local government can provide leadership in e-business initiatives.

Draft Wellington Regional Strategy
The Wellington region's local authorities are joining together to create a shared vision for the region. The "unlocking economic potential" focus area of the draft Strategy has a close relationship with the economic development component of the ICT Policy as its main aims are to plug the region's telecommunications infrastructure gaps and connect the networks.

Strategic Public Libraries Framework

Local government, central government and other stakeholder groups are working together to develop a strategic framework to guide the public library sector over the next decade.

The framework looks at how libraries can be a means for enabling all of society to share in the benefits of technological advancements – as they can ensure access for all to the digitally based information that is becoming increasingly available and accessble via computers and the internet.

1.5   Review

The ICT area is witnessing rapid change not just in technological capability, but also in attitudes to technology and user behaviour. Things seen as challenges now may not be so in a short space of time. The Council's own business needs, particularly in the area of how its libraries are developing with ever increasing technological advancements, may also impact on how this policy is implemented.

Because of the rapid rate of these developments, this policy will be monitored and changed as required. The policy will also be reviewed every three years to ensure that:

- the Council's involvement is still necessary
- the policy is targeted to emerging ICT needs
- new technologies, and the new challenges they may present, are taken into account.

SECTION 2 – ICT and Economic Development

2.1   Introduction

The Council's draft aims and objectives for this component of the policy are still under development. A separate public consultation process will take place once this has been achieved.

SECTION 3 – ICT and Community Development

3.1   Policy Aim

Technology provides opportunities for individuals and communities to gain new capabilities that can positively impact on their lives economically, socially and culturally. ICT has the potential to improve quality of life, educational and employment opportunities, and provide access to timely and cost effective services.

However, there are communities and individuals in Wellington that do not have access to ICT or the skills and confidence to use it, be it due to economic, social, physical or cultural circumstances. Many of these communities and individuals are already disadvantaged in other ways and risk being further disadvantaged as current and new technologies become increasingly prevalent.

The e-Community component of the policy seeks to minimise the division between those who do and do not have access to ICT, with its main aim being:

"To build capability and capacity in the community so that all can participate in an economy and society that has an increasing reliance on ICT."

3.2   Strategic Fit

The e-Community policy falls under the *Draft Social and Recreation Strategy*. e-Community will contribute to the Council meeting the following outcomes of the Strategy:

- Outcome 6: More actively engaged – Wellington residents will be actively engaged in their communities, and in recreation and leisure activities

- Outcome 7: Better connected – Wellington will offer excellent access to a sound social infrastructure that supports high levels of social cohesion.

e-Community will also directly contribute to the Council meeting the strategic priority of "building capability and capacity within the community to promote social cohesion and sound social infrastructure".

3.3   Analysis of Wellington's Community ICT Environment

Information on ICT usage in Wellington is currently sourced from Statistic New Zealand's census results from 2001. Based on these results, the communities of interest and identity in Wellington least likely to have household access to the internet are:
- Pacific Island
- Maori
- people in low income households
- households with only one parent

- households that rent from a city council or Housing New Zealand
- people aged 65 years and over
- people with no or low qualifications or poor literacy
- unemployed people
- refugees and migrants
- people with disabilities.

The geographical communities least likely to have household internet access are Grenada North, Kilbirnie, Lyall Bay, Berhampore, Newtown, Strathmore, the Aro and Nairn Street areas and Miramar/Maupuia.

In 2004, the Council undertook an initial needs assessment in Wellington's three most ICT deprived communities (Newtown/Berhampore, Kilbirnie/Lyall Bay and Grenada North). This assessment sought to gain an insight into the perceived barriers facing people in using ICT. These were identified as:
- practical (such as lack of access to computers)
- emotional/attitudinal (such as fear of computers or being unsure of the relevance of ICT)
- cultural barriers to ICT usage (such as needing to learn how to use computers in a language other than English).

The main reasons why people thought they would use ICT was to:
- keep in touch with friends, family and cultural groups via email
- keep up-to-date with news and information
- read/listen to music in their own language (seen as critical by immigrants)
- access entertainment and relaxation tools – e.g. games, music
- obtain information and undertake research
- access education and learning opportunities
- seek employment.

3.4   Objectives

The policy's objectives aim to overcome the barriers people experience in using ICT – be it because they are unsure of the relevance of ICT, lack access to it or do not have the skills and confidence to use it.

Objective 1: Raising awareness

To raise awareness amongst targeted communities about the potential benefits of ICT.

Under this objective, the Council will seek to raise awareness about the potential economic, social and educational benefits of using ICT (for example, increased connection with friends, access to e-learning opportunities, democratic participation, enhanced employment).

This objective particularly focuses on breaking down emotional and attitudinal barriers to ICT usage, such as overcoming a fear of ICT. The most likely mechanism for achieving this will be through localised advertising – informing people where free

and/or affordable access to ICT equipment, training and technical support is located, and raising awareness about the cost of ICT.

> Possible other mechanisms the Council will explore for achieving this objective include:
>
> - IT centre open days – where ICT could be showcased and people have the chance to use it while being helped by a trainer.
>
> - "Asset maps" – showing where community/public assets are, which could be made readily available to communities.

Objective 2: Increased access

To increase access to ICT for those who do not have ready access.

This objective is focused on ensuring access to ICT – through making it readily available to disadvantaged communities and residents.

The Council sees community computing hubs[2] as key to meeting this objective. The Council currently supports three hubs in Newtown,[3] which were initiated as part of the "Smart Newtown" pilot project undertaken during 2001/02. It is very likely that this objective will result in the Council supporting further "visible and accessible" computer hubs in other Wellington suburbs. Hubs could be located in such community facilities as a public library, community centre, Council housing complex, recreation centre, Citizen Advice Bureau, retirement home, marae or enabled through a partnership with a school, cyber cafe, or another group that operates an ICT room.

Taking into account the valuable insights gained from the Smart Newtown Pilot project, factors that need to be considered when selecting a site for a community-based hub/ICT centre are:
- the site is, or has the potential to become, a 'third place' where people from the community can meet outside their homes
- the ICT hub should be a natural addition to, or extension of other community services already available at the site
- the site provides a reasonable degree of safety and security to users
- cultural and ethnic issues are catered for in the design and operation of the ICT hub
- the centre has the administrative expertise, processes and procedures in place to handle the increased workload from the ICT hub.

Mechanisms for enhancing community groups' access to and training on ICT are already also being supported by the Council through the "Wellington Community Network" (WCN)[4], which is an electronic community network operated by the

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[2] Community computing hubs are places that provide free access to computers and (usually) the internet. Free training may also be offered.

[3] These are located in the Newtown Network Centre (10 computers), Newtown Community and Cultural Centre (six computers), and the Newtown Library (two computers, without internet access). In the past year, the following changes have occurred:
- the Newtown Network Centre and Newtown Library computers have been upgraded
- NCCC is being used more effectively – with regular school homework groups using it.

[4] WCN currently hosts the websites of 649 community groups.

Wellington 2020 Communications Trust (W2020)[5]. WCN provides free website-hosting, an email service, training and support, as well as a discussion forum function to community groups that may otherwise not be able to be online.

> Possible other mechanisms the Council will explore for achieving this objective include:
>
> - a mobile computer unit – e.g. a bus e-enabled with multiple computers and internet access. The unit could visit any part of Wellington and would be operated by people able to provide training and resolve minor technical issues.
>
> - "rent-to-buy" schemes – enabling low income families to purchase ICT with little or no initial out-lay
>
> - support for computers in homes programmes in school areas (particularly disadvantaged areas).

Objective 3: Affordable training and support

To provide affordable training and technical support to new ICT users in the target groups.

The Council will continue to focus on providing basic training for people who have never used a computer before (for example, people who may not know what a mouse is or have keyboard skills). The aim of this training is to enable people to become sufficiently skilled that they are able to access other free or low cost training courses (such as free polytechnic classes).

This objective also addresses the specific barriers that prevent people from accessing other ICT training courses (such as cultural and language issues).

Ways of overcoming the barriers of obtaining affordable technical support will also be explored, as it has been identified as a need for people and groups that may have older computers installed in their offices or homes and only have limited resources to support them.

> Possible mechanisms for achieving this objective include:
>
> - providing basic training in different languages – either through interpreters or training people from different cultures to train others
>
> - providing basic training at different times to different groups (for example, groups of women, different ethnic groups, aged based groups)
>
> - providing affordable technical support or a help desk – which could be located in a public library, a "mobile computer unit" or provided through an "e-rider"
>
> - setting up a buddy system or informal neighbourhood internet help groups – so that people are encouraged to continue using ICT.

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[5] 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 the National 2020 Trust.

3.5   Principles

The following five principles have been developed to guide the Council's approach in supporting e-Community projects:

Principle 1: Meeting identified need

The Council will work with communities to assess their main ICT needs and the best possible solution to meet those needs before projects are implemented. The Council will prioritise projects that are focused on the people using the technology rather than technology provision.

Solutions found will suit the communities' needs, without a "one size fits all" solution being taken across the city. This may result in different solutions being provided within one community (although solutions that can benefit a number of communities at once will generally be sought).

The needs assessment process will establish communities' "buy-in" to the project, establishing a basis for community ownership, as well as identifying key stakeholders (or "digital champions") that are able to participate in leading projects.

Principle 2: Targeting disadvantage

The Council's community ICT programme will be targeted towards disadvantaged individuals and groups in the community.

The Council will work with those communities of interest and identity that have been identified as having the lowest access to ICT (i.e. Pacific Island, Maori, people in low income households, households with only one parent, households that rent from a city council or Housing New Zealand and people aged 65 years and over).

The Council will also initially concentrate its efforts on those geographical areas known to have low ICT access and high concentrations of the above target communities (Newtown, Berhampore, Kilbirnie, Lyall Bay and Grenada North followed by Strathmore, Aro/Nairn Street and Miramar/Maupuia).

Information on target groups and areas will be updated with each new census (at the time of this policy being written, the next census is scheduled for 2006).

While not necessarily "disadvantaged", community and not for profit groups also fit into this category – particularly if they do not have the resources to purchase computer systems, obtain internet access or afford the required training and technical support.

Targeting of specific communities may result in an uneven distribution of community ICT programmes across the city. This policy is premised on prioritising some communities rather than achieving an equitable, city-wide approach.

Principle 3: Working in partnership

The Council will work in partnership with the community, central government, not for profit, philanthropic and private sectors to deliver community ICT programmes.

This principle seeks to ensure the success of community ICT initiatives by ensuring programmes are:
- driven by the community and local "digital champion(s)" (where such people are identified through the needs assessment process)
- community "owned" – through a high level of community buy-in (recognising that final responsibility will rest with the Council where the Council is the principle funder and coordinator)
- established with the appropriate resources (particularly sustainable funding, technology and management).

Principle 4: Coordinating resources

The Council aims to maximise the use of assets in the community and ensure there is no duplication of resources through providing a coordinated approach to implementing and operating community ICT initiatives.

Part of ensuring that resources are coordinated adequately will be achieved by the appointment of an officer responsible for overseeing the Council's e-Community projects. This person would provide:
- clear project management of Council programmes – to provide continuity through project's design, implementation and operation, and to ensure the expectations of all stakeholders are understood
- a main Council liaison point for community and private sector relationships
- a point of financial accountability for the Council's budget.

The Council will also establish an "asset map" showing where current resources are, such as community ICT equipment and expertise resources, skills, services, buildings, land, and ICT devices. Such a map could include libraries, schools, community centres, Work and Income NZ offices, recreation centres, cyber cafes, independent community ICT providers (for example, SeniorNet), any place where training is available (for example, through the Community Education Centre, Whitireia Polytechnic).

Principle 5: Ensuring sustainability

Programmes will only be initiated if it can be ensured they will be sustainable before they are implemented.

Funding, technology and human resources all need to be sustainable. Sponsorship, services and support (including 'in-kind') will be sought for community ICT projects. The Council will be committed to ongoing operational funding, but expects that it will not meet the full costs of operating any programme as cost sharing partnerships will be actively sought.

The Council will support initiatives that take a sustainable approach to rapidly changing technology, looking for solutions that can provide high speed and high specification technology without necessarily providing the most recent equipment.

The Council recognises that volunteers are important to the operation of projects and will put a programme for attracting, training and retaining volunteers in place. The Council will also provide training and development opportunities for community people employed to coordinate specific programmes.

Electronic Waste

A further part of ensuring sustainability will be achieved through the Council determining its position on the disposal of electronic waste (such as computer hardware and monitors). Currently the Council is addressing this issue through its Solid Waste Management Plan, where e-waste has been identified as a potential area of concern. The Council is keeping abreast with national and international developments in order to take advantage of any future sustainable and pragmatic diversion or reuse opportunities.

3.6   Policy Implementation

The Council is currently supporting the following e-Community initiatives:
*   funding three community computing hubs in Newtown ($78,500)
*   providing a grant for the Wellington 2020 Communications Trust (W2020)[6], which runs the Wellington Community Network on the Council's behalf and provides advice on community ICT ($145,000).

Through its library network the Council also provides access to free customer PCs, from which users can:
*   access the Council's and selected government and information websites (including thousands of current electronic journals and newspapers and links to international newspapers in community languages)
*   undertaking word processing (in the Central and Karori libraries)
*   obtain training from staff.

Libraries will continue to play a key role in implementing this policy, particularly as plans proceed to extend the opportunity to use computers and access the internet in libraries through a "People's Network" approach.[7]

In addition, the Council is considering whether or not to allocate additional funding for ICT through the 2006-2016 draft LTCCP document. Included in that document is new funding for:

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[6] 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.

[7] This is the name given to a programme undertaken in the United Kingdom to provide access and training throughout the public libraries network..

- A Community ICT Coordinator – to oversee all of the Council's projects in this area ($70,000)
- Computer rooms in two of Council's Housing complexes – Newtown Park and Arlington flats ($80,000 in operational expenditure, $45,000 capital expenditure). Funding for this project includes a paid "room coordinator" who will be responsible for overseeing the rooms and volunteers, facilitating the provision of training, and providing low level technical support (the budget also includes funding for higher level technical support)
- Further computer hubs to be established in other suburbs that have an identified need (budget starting at $76,000 in 2008/09 and incrementally increasing to $209,000 in 2011/12).

This is not the full extent of the policy implementation. In light of the success of these projects, further initiatives may be considered as part of future annual plans.

3.7   Performance Measures

Performance measures will be established to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects undertaken in this policy and to determine the policy's overall effectiveness.

For example, the Newtown computer hubs provide a good benchmark for understanding the level of usage for a successful computer hub, how many people can be trained through the hubs, and whether or not new users are being attracted to use the hubs. Further information could also be sought on how many users go on to owning their own computers as a result of their initial interactions with ICT at the hubs.

SECTION 4: e-democracy

4.1   What is e-democracy?

e-Democracy, or electronic democracy, refers to how the Council will use ICT to facilitate and encourage participation in its local decision-making processes.

e-Democracy is usually closely associated with electronic voting (e-Voting). This policy, however, focuses on how the Council can promote democratic engagement in between election times by providing information and avenues for residents and ratepayers to interact with elected members and officers on local issues.

The Council recognises that it is just one democratic player and that other organisations, groups and individuals may also be proponents of their own e-Democracy initiatives.

4.2   Why e-Democracy?

As public usage of the internet grows, so does the expectation that central and local government will increasingly communicate and interact with residents and ratepayers online. The advent of the internet has caused governments worldwide to reconsider the way they communicate with their citizens as the internet is seen to have the potential to "renew" democracy from a trend of increasing disengagement. Many believe that e-Democracy may be able to help reverse the decline being experienced in political participation and engagement, and stimulate involvement between election times.

The internet is seen a tool that can promote, strengthen and enhance democratic structures as it can be used to:

- make decision-making more transparent – decisions, and the information behind them, can be more readily accessible

- provide greater accountability – as it can be used to follow and scrutinise elected members' actions and decisions

- enable individuals to access information and services – including "hard to reach" groups in the civic decision-making process. ICT can overcome issues of low mobility (for example, for disabled, elderly, people with young children), sensory deprivation, or other barriers such as geography, a lack of time, cultural and/or language barriers

- provide individuals and groups with an immediate, inclusive, and interactive tool that encourages dialogue between citizens, elected members, community groups and communities.

- build trust between the government and citizens – through government responsiveness, in delivering services and by providing a secure, private place to express opinions.

ICT has the potential to transform the way residents interact with the Council. It is a powerful tool that can connect people with information as well as provide an interactive experience where views can be expressed and debated. It gives individuals more choice about how they can participate in the civic decision-making process and provides a means for community groups to activate wide response to government actions.

Through its e-Democracy policy the Council aims to *encourage an increased and enhanced level of engagement in the Council's decision-making processes and to provide efficient access to Council services.*

Limitations on e-Democracy

e-Democracy is not the entire solution to addressing the issue of disengagement. Evaluations undertaken on international e-Democracy pilots demonstrate that while technology has the potential to strengthen participation in representative democracy, it has not proven to be the complete answer. For this reason, e-Democracy will only be used to complement conventional forms of participation rather than replace them.

Furthermore, e-Democracy has the potential to exacerbate barriers to participation unless it is complemented with an e-Community programme. The same people who do not traditionally participate in Council processes tend to also have the least access to ICT. For e-Democracy to provide maximum benefit, it is essential the barriers to ICT access are reduced.

4.3   Strategic Fit

The e-Democracy policy falls under the *Draft Governance Strategy*. e-Democracy will contribute to the Council meeting the strategy's following outcomes:

- Outcome 5: More inclusive – Wellingtonians will be actively involved in the future direction of their communities

- Outcome 6: More actively engaged –
    - Wellingtonians will operate an open and honest decision-making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system
    - Information required by citizens and groups will be easily accessible, to enable participation in the community

e-Democracy will also directly contribute to the Council meeting the following strategic priorities for 2006-09:
- improving the transparency and quality of processes for public involvement in (civic) decision-making
- improving communication with communities.

4.4 e-Voting

The Local Electoral Act 2001 does not provide for online voting (e-Voting). The issue of e-Voting is not addressed in the policy at this stage.

4.5 Objectives

The following objectives have been developed for the e-Democracy Policy.

Objective 1: Accessible information

To provide easily accessible and relevant information that will enable people to effectively participate in the Council's decision-making process.

The provision of information is one of the building blocks of e-Democracy. Information is a precursor to engagement as it enables people to be informed enough to participate, scrutinise decisions and hold elected members accountable.

The main goal underlying this objective is for the Council to ensure the information it provides is:
- relevant
- able to be found easily on the website
- sufficient, enabling people to participate effectively by having the necessary information.

Possible initiatives that could support this objective include:

- expanding the "Public Input" page on the Council's website so that it:
    - provides an explanation of the participation/consultation process
    - shows the progress of past consultations as well as current ones through the decision-making process. The Bristol City Council has an example of such an initiative (http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/consultation-finder.en)
    - provides a weekly summary updating how many submissions have been received for present consultations
    - provides a summary of how past consultations have had an impact on the decision being made (e.g. Manchester City Council has a page titled 'How does consultation make a difference': http://www.manchester.gov.uk/bestvalue/consult/change.htm)

- live online coverage of Council meetings (webcasting) – which can also be archived online for later viewing

- elected member websites/blogs/e-newsletters (subscription based) – enabling elected members to provide information directly to the public about their role, the decisions they are and will be making and other city and Council matters

- "MyGov" – enabling citizens to customise the content displayed to them on the Council's website so that it displays all the relevant information they want in one quick view (e.g. such as property information, community facilities, events, and dog licenses).

Objective 2: Accessible elected members and Council officers

To provide a variety of avenues for the public to engage with elected members and Council officers on issues affecting the city.

The provision of information should be a two way flow so that it is not just about the Council providing information to the public, but having clear channels for the public to provide information to the Council.

This objective recognises that the internet provides a unique environment for overcoming traditional barriers to consultation as it is not constrained by time, cost, and existing information networks.

The Council has enabled the public to provide information online through online submission forms, feedback forms (e.g. the "fix-it" and complaints forms) and by providing elected members' email addresses. The next step is for it to provide interactive facilities that enable discussion and debate between community groups, residents, Council officers and elected members. Such mechanisms allow for residents and groups to discuss issues that affect them, which might not necessarily be the issues being considered by the Council at that point in time.

In providing interactive facilities, the Council will establish clear guidelines on how it will respond to public input (as this will be critical to building trust and ensuring ongoing involvement in discussions with the Council) and the sphere of influence that contributions will be able to impact on. Initiatives in this area will be supported by:

- clear rules of engagement – a charter setting out participants' rights and responsibilities
- increased officer resources to ensure the mechanisms are supported effectively
- appropriate marketing to raise awareness about the mechanisms.

Possible initiatives that could support this objective include:

- e-Petitions – a system for hosting electronic petitions (where "electronic" signatures are collected online and the petition is traced from its receipt at Council through to the Council's response to it). The Scottish Parliament has an example of such an initiative (http://epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/)

- electronic public participation – enabling people to submit via an online form what they would say as part of the standard "public participation" slot at a committee or Council meeting

- interactive forums – e.g. web-based discussion forums, chat rooms, or email lists focused on policy and planning issues, which the public, elected members and officers can be part of. Recognising that this may best be achieved through an independently facilitated website, e.g. the Waitakere e-Democracy Group (www.wedg.org.nz), the "Ask Bristol" website (www.askbristol.com)

- elected member websites/blogs/e-newsletters (subscription based) – access to Councillors through their own websites (which also might include a discussion forum, weblog facility, or regular online chat session)

- "online surgeries" – chat room style fora enabling citizens to conduct secure

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online discussions individually and as part of a group with local government representatives

- neighbourhood websites – local community websites promoting interaction between local residents and their representatives and encouraging public participation.

Objective 3: Encouraging broader consultation

To encourage "hard to reach" groups to participate via the internet.

This objective focuses on extending consultation and engagement beyond the groups that are traditionally politically engaged. These groups include many of those listed in the e-Community component of this policy, which makes it critical that those groups can overcome the barrier of lack of access to ICT.

The Council already meets this objective in that it is accessible to people who need to use "reader software" and who have low specification computers (the site does not require the use of high specification programmes). Information on how people can participate in the Council's decision-making processes is also provided in alternative languages.

The Wellington Community Network also contributes to the Council's e-Democracy outcomes, giving community groups a powerful tool to advance democratic issues through their potential to connect and mobilise communities as well as access timely information.

Possible further initiatives that could support this objective include:

- providing increased amounts of information online that is directed to hard to reach groups and is in a suitable format – this could be achieved by targeting areas of the website to such groups or by providing information in multiple languages

- using mobile phone "text" messages as a means of communicating (e.g. targeting youth about new consultation)

- neighbourhood websites – local community websites promoting interaction between local residents and their representatives and encouraging public participation.

Objective 4: Enhancing accountability

To enhance the accountability of elected members.

This objective ties in closely with the previous objectives – as at its heart is the transparency of the Council's decision-making processes and providing the public with the ability to scrutinise public documents and decisions.

The Council will continue to provide information on the website such as the Council's accountability documents (annual plans, annual reports), bylaws, policies and plans, meeting schedules (including agendas, reports and minutes) and contact details for elected members. The implementation of initiatives already mentioned above will

contribute to further enhancing elected members' accountability – for example, through such initiatives as:

- elected member websites, weblog facilities and webcasting

- an expanded "Public Input" page – which could include a summary of how consultation processes have influenced decisions.

Objective 5: Efficient services

To increase the Council's efficiency by providing council services online.

The Council has an internal Website Strategy that is working to meet this objective. For example, work is currently underway to make GIS data and the archives databases publicly available online. The Web Strategy focuses on enhancing the Council's services online in a manner that will be sustainable – in terms of cost-effectiveness and in the use of officer resources.

In providing feedback on this policy, submitters are requested to tell us what services they would most like to see available online.

4.6   Policy Implementation

The Council has been advancing its e-Democracy capability over the past few years through the information and functions it has made available on the website.[8] Recent additions to the website include:

- information on how to participate in the Council's decision-making processes in a number of different languages
- a web alert subscription service, where people can elect to receive email notifications about new content in areas of interest to individual users
- a "fix-it" page the public can use to inform the Council of a problem.

The Council also supports the Wellington Community Network (WCN)[9] which not only addresses community groups' ICT needs but doubles as an e-Democracy tool as it enables community groups to have an online presence and voice, and to access online facilities, information and programmes they might not otherwise be able to.

Through its library network the Council provides access to free customer PCs, which can access over 6,000 websites – including the Council's and selected government and information websites. In addition, the library provides:
- free access to thousands of current electronic journals and newspapers.
- a virtual online reference service "Anyquestions"

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[8] The public is able to access elected members' contact details (including email addresses), accountability information (annual plan, annual report), policy and bylaws information, meeting schedules (including reports and minutes), a consultation schedule, information on all of the Council's services. Members of the public can also make an electronic submission for Council consultations (This function has been used increasingly over the past few years. On average, 30% of submissions are now received via the website - the range from November 2004 to date was 3% through to 58%).

[9] An electronic community network that provides website hosting to over 580 community groups, as well as content management support, training and email and discussion forum facilities.

- migrant community library guide: information in 15 languages and links to international newspapers in community languages
- heritage digitisation programme – including creating online indexes to local information.

In addition, the Council is considering whether or not to allocate additional funding for ICT through the 2006-2016 draft LTCCP document. Included in that document is $55,000 of new funding for such initiatives such as:

- e-Panels – residents are able to sign up to be part of a group that is regularly provided with information on relevant Council issues and consultations and asked to provide feedback
- e-Petitions – petitions can be established online, have names collected electronically and then be tracked to show the Council's receipt of it through to how it is responded to
- e-Public participation – residents are able to electronically submit comments for a Council Committee's consideration at a public meeting. The comments will be treated as though they are part of the formal "public participation" item on the agenda, and will be formally minuted.

This is not the full extent of the policy implementation. In light of the success of these projects, further initiatives may be considered as part of future annual plans.

4.7   Performance Measures

Performance measures will be established to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects undertaken in this policy and to determine the policy's overall effectiveness.