

DISABILITY REFERENCE GROUP

MINUTES

5.30 P.M. – Tuesday 27th April 2010

Committee Room 1

Members Present

Sara Pivac-Alexander (Co-Chair)
Philippa McDonald (Co-Chair)
Thomas Bryan
Errolyn Jones
Alan Royal
Isobel King
Linda Hobman
Rosemary Cole

Also Present

Jenny Rains (WCC)
Stewart Sexton
Councillor Iona Pannett
Teena Pennington
John McGrath

1. Councillors Celia Wade-Brown & Iona Pannett – Draft Annual Plan

The DRG combined with the ERG for the presentation on the Draft Annual Plan.

The DAP is the process that set the rates in Wellington City, outlines all of the activities for Year 2 of the LTCCP and the proposed variances from the LTCCP. The average increase for rates is 2.88% after growth. This is lower than originally outlined in the LTCCP of 6%. The key areas of focus are working towards the Rugby World Cup, Community Facilities Policy, preparing for climate change and strengthening facilities and infrastructure.

Rugby World Cup includes the building of a centrepiece village and sculpture; on going co-ordination of the website and volunteers; training facilities; aligning and enhancing existing works; Courtenay Place improvements; street cleaning; city gateway improvements brought forward; Maori heritage trail; and parking advisory signs. The Accessibility Advisor will be working with the RWC team.

Draft Community Facilities Policy covers community centres, libraries and pools. The focus is around the size of suburbs/centres, population and demand. This policy looks at the redevelopment of the pools, more funding for community centres, pool upgrades and school partnerships for learn to swim programmes.

Draft Climate Change Action Plan includes extensive commitments to sustainability and to reducing the city's emissions. The new action plan proposed includes an electric vehicle pilot, assessing Wellington's vulnerability to climate change, Council energy efficiency initiatives and energy saver programmes.

Strengthening Facilities and Infrastructure looks at fences and guardrails, additional bus shelters, enviroschools support, new public toilets at the Lyall Bay Surf Club, strengthening the City to Sea Bridge, repiling the Aro Valley community hall, new signs for dog areas and support for the Basin Reserve and St James Trusts to maintain their assets.

Council are also continuing with the Housing Upgrade project and looking at the contract for recycling. All of the DAP is on the Council website. Submissions close on 10 May with oral submissions being heard from 13-18 May.

Comments & Questions

When designing the RWC website accessibility needs to be kept in mind especially with regard to PDFs as this was a problem with the 7's website with the PDFs being too large.

With Council supporting enviroschools will this be at the expense of other businesses already taking action. Will this provide value for money? There are a range of programmes and Council are supporting more than one. It is useful to expand on this and hopefully this will also bring down the cost for businesses already supporting these programmes. The sustainability business network put in an application for a grant and decisions will be made in June.

Who is going to look at making the central city more accessible? This project has already started called Wellington 2020 looking at the city over the next 30 years. This project's role is to look at streets and open spaces. Will the DRG be able to consult on these projects? Work has only just started on this and consultations will start in June this year. It was noted that it would be good if the DRG were kept informed of priorities with this project.

With the trial of electric vehicles there is no reference to public transport. Does Council have a view around promoting the better use of public transport? The Transport Strategy encourages people to use public transport and Council have the new Manners Mall project and will be providing more bus lanes.

Council are looking at the aspects of procuring these vehicles in partnership with other organisations that have an interest in the use of these vehicles. Safety will be part of this project ensuring the infrastructure is in place for charging these vehicles.

There have been accidents overseas with the use of these vehicles because people do not hear or see them coming. This issue will be passed on to the Safe and Sustainable Transport Group.

2. Apologies

Lisette Wesseling

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting was deferred until the next meeting.

4. Teena Pennington & John McGrath – Overview of Strategy and Policy

The Strategy and Policy Development report that was prepared for the previous DRG meeting was tabled.

This report was prepared in response to a request from the DRG. The common terms of the strategic policies, programmes and bylaws set out what Council is trying to achieve overall for Wellington City to be an affordable, accessible, vibrant city. Council now work under seven strategic areas based on the four well-beings set in the Local Government Act (Social, Cultural, Environment and Economic). Three other areas of importance for the city are Urban Development and Transport – what the City wants to achieve and what is key for the city – and Governance – to respond to the key issue of engaging people in working with Council and Council's decision making. The seven strategic areas have supporting policies and bylaws and the DRG's action plan would come under these strategies. Council have a range of policies, ie, under social there is a homelessness policy. Council cannot just do a range of work because people ask. Council have a Policy Programme that gives effect to Council's LTCCP. This Policy Programme is agreed at the Strategy and Policy Committee level. Strategies and Policies are developed in full consultation

with communities, are subject to political agreement and need to go to the Strategy and Policy Committee who give final recommendations.

Comments & Questions

Where do you see the DRG fitting in this? *John McGrath said that he was happy to sit down with the new members of the DRG to advise on any specifics. He noted that accessibility is integrated and explicit in all policies and strategic development in Council.*

If accessibility were a strategy then any policy or bylaw developed would have to have reference to that strategy and because there is no strategy then it is left up to individual officers and Council when making a bylaw to consider accessibility. *John McGrath said this is not how he would express this. Council believe the issue of accessibility should be in all thinking and should be fundamental to all areas of strategy. This would be about engaging communities who are pivotal for each strategy and this is not a silo issue.*

This depends on the individuals involved at any given time who can vary over time and there is nothing to say Council must have regard to accessibility issues. There is nothing to say that Council have breached a policy. *John McGrath said that Council processes are very transparent and Council officers are charged with ensuring all aspects are taken into account. When officers give advice on developing a policy we bring the policy to the DRG who can advise on the policy.*

There is no requirement that Council bring the advice back to the DRG so we can see what has been done with the advice given. *All documents are public documents and Council will bring specific items or topics to the DRG for advice and discussion.*

A way needs to be developed so that the DRG follow up on actions and advice given.

The DRG are currently preparing an Accessibility Action Plan. Accessibility needs to be reflected in the next LTCCP and along all areas of strategic thinking. It was noted that the City's vision does not include the word accessibility. The DRG have made a submission to this effect stating the nature of the changing demographics of Wellington.

DRG would like the assurance that the message of the needs and requirements of disability and accessibility are being received and listened to in terms of the next LTCCP.

The way that Council staff present at DRG meetings needs to be handed out to all Council Officers, ie, is it accessible.

DRG members noted their concerns that the key point of accessibility will be lost in strategies and policies because there is nothing unique to cover this. *The opportunity is there for the action plan to have the ability to provide focus over a number of areas, ie buildings, transport, development, housing and partnerships. The action plan could provide areas of focus and priorities over areas that are important.*

Will the action plan be strong enough to have the impact that the DRG are looking for and if this is modified by Council will it have the strength to stand up? *John McGrath noted by way of example that the Climate Change Action Plan was first created in 2006 and is now being updated in 2010. This action plan has the ability to be reviewed over time and the ability to gain support has been achieved.*

How will the action plan have an impact with key stakeholders like the hospital and business around the city? *This is the same for the Climate Change Action Plan. This plan has a focus for Council and the city. Work cannot be achieved by Council alone and this will be the same with accessibility in any services and with partners across the city.*

It was noted that DRG members were concerned that this has the potential to be sidelined and not be as an important document as it should be.

The question was asked if Council were saying no to public consultation for an Accessibility Action Plan. *There would be some public input for the action plan and the action plan will be on the website for consultation. Certain key people will be consulted and this would follow along the same lines of the Climate Change Action Plan. There is also the on-going nature of an action plan with further consultation where there new initiatives depending on the content.*

Why have other councils taken a different approach to having an accessibility policy? *Different councils will have different terminology and different approaches. We believe this is best achieved by an action plan and integrated thinking across all strategies and into all Council work.*

Is there any reason why we cannot have both an action plan and an overarching policy? DRG members noted their concern with what has happened in the past with Wellington City not performing very well in terms of accessibility, ie, continuing problems with the website, kerb cuts not meeting standards. No one is accountable and things do not measure up to the standards. DRG have raised these issues continuously. Will an action plan really resolve all the issues to make Wellington an inclusive city? *The Climate Change Action Plan is not just a set of actions, it does have an overarching statement of what we want to achieve. It has a statement of purpose and what we want to achieve as a city. We might just be getting caught up in terminology.*

We cannot see any policy leading to strategy leading to an action plan related to accessibility. *The action plan is a work in progress until we see what we want to achieve and the statements within. Need to have a vision, ambition, targets and goals and have all the elements within one document with areas of focus.*

Under the time frames we need to aim to have this completed by the end of the triennium. Can we look at getting this onto the Forward Programme for the next triennium and have a full public process on this so it does not fall through the cracks?

5. Fiona Johnson – Draft Community Facilities Policy

Council have a current community facilities policy at the moment and as part of the Community Facilities Review have agreed for officers to review the policy and come back to Council with recommendations. This was accepted by Council for consultation in December and is open for consultation at the moment. This policy covers pools, recreation centres, libraries and community centres. The old policy was a process based policy with Council considering new investment in community properties. The level of service for communities in the city and setting out what people can expect in the community is one of the key differences in the policy. This policy is focused around centres rather than suburbs with a focus on retail centres to be reinforced as centres of activity with a defined catchment around centres that are expected to be within a walkable distance. The policy sets out specific criteria on size and what you can expect at each of the centres. These are the Council's strategic priorities that will be focused on. The pools part of the policy focuses on learn to swim and making the most of pool space, the libraries focus is on technology and the recreation and community centres focuses on developing partnerships and providing greater access for people and accessibility to buildings. The policy sets out the criteria on priorities for investment with service levels and strategic priorities. Libraries include refreshing the Central Library that is 20 years old, looking at building a new larger library in Johnsonville and making a large investment in technology. Pools include the reallocation of funding, focus on learn to swim, new pools and a partnership with schools. Community centres includes a new community centre in Churton Park and upgrading of some facilities. Recreation centres includes the completion of the new sports centre with no more expenditure in that area.

Comments & Questions:

With regard to the improvements in the libraries with improved facilities and extra resources, will there be an increase in service for home bound people? *Council do not specifically have that at the moment in the plan but this is something that could be looked at. Council have not identified this as part of the technology shift.*

For a lot of older people technology is not an option for them but getting books on CD has been a great service. Technology is just another barrier for a lot of people.

With the pools and the focus on learn to swim programmes this highlights not having an accessibility strategy due to the bulk of the population aging. People trying to get hydro therapy time are finding this difficult enough let alone finding pools accessible. *The Kilbirnie Pool proposal is to build a new dedicated hydro therapy pool so the two pools would be separated. This has been recognised as an issue.*

With the aging population, having access to technology and the ability to use this for many people is difficult. People do not have the incomes to cover the technology needed. Many mental health consumers find it hard to learn the technology – Council need to be aware of these issues.

With regard to recreation centres, there seems to have been a lot of upgrading but parking is still a problem. Are these centres going to be smart centres for people who do not have the technology and will computers be provided in community centres? *Community centres are run by a committee to meet the needs of the local community so it is up to the community centre whether they provide computers or not. Council may encourage community centres to provide this type of programme but that is not part of the upgrade. The upgrade is to ensure the community get the best use of the building and to make the space more accessible and useable.*

Council's community ICT has changed, will Council put money towards developing skills in the community and development of the Council website? *Council see this project working alongside community centres.*

Where is the indoor sports centre and is it accessible? *The sports centre is in Kilbirnie on Cobham Drive opposite the fire station. It is being constructed at the moment. It has to meet the requirements of the Building Code and will therefore meet accessibility requirements.*

As part of the library upgrade libraries will be getting more computers into the library but this will create an issue of space with computers taking up more space than books.

6. Philip Orde – City Housing Signage Projects

As part of the City Housing upgrade project Council have looked at way finding as everyone has issues with signage. The Architectural Services Unit were given a brief to overhaul the signage at all the housing sites. Previously there was an ad hoc approach to signage with varying vintages of signs creating a clutter of signs as a result. Philip then presented examples of the proposed signs to the group.

Comments & Questions:

It was noted that the positioning of signs is important as well.

In terms of accessibility how do you plan on introducing accessibility into signage in the older buildings? *One of the things that Council looked at is "what can we do with signage when visiting if you have an impairment?" Council will provide signage with tactile wording and have simple graphic designs for people who do not have English as a first language. The community gardens signage will be upgraded with a more softer design and colours. There will be a gateway sign*

provided that will be backlit. Council are also looking at the colours and contrast of the signage with regard to visual impairment.

Will the signs be in plain English? *Yes with our Communications Unit making sure the wording is correct. Will the signs be based on international signage? Yes, we will be using the same symbols so that people from other countries will be able to recognise the signs. We will also be providing signs in Te Reo.*

Colour is important for way finding for people. If someone is told to go to the purple floor they can understand this better than being given a number. *Blocks will have colour themes for identification.*

Has the design of the signs been discussed with regard to colour blindness? *Council have not had detailed discussions around this but there is scope within the design to try different colours.*

Braille is a universal and international language with huge inroads having been made in the promotion of its usage. International hotels and Wellington Hospital use Braille and the DRG would encourage Council to use Braille in the signage.

Using coloured routes like they do in the hospital is good for the intellectually disabled community.

7. Nick Mouat, Athfield Architects – Taranaki Street Wharf Public Space & Wharewaka

Athfield Architects are working on the landscape design that covers the area from the City to Sea Bridge to the Rowing Club including the area around the St Johns Bar and Odilins Plaza. There are many components of the work that include extending the lagoon, a new flat lawn area that will be built up to Jervois Quay, a lagoon connection, a series of terraces ranging from 1.5 to 4 metres that will be mostly in grass but will have a defined area of gravel and sand at the bottom. There will be a collection of paved hearts providing a connection from the City to Sea Bridge, the new building on Jervois Quay back onto the wharf. Pathways will be designed to try and give a very clear visual connection to where you are going as it is not really obvious where you are headed to at the moment. There will also be a clearer delineation of the area where the rowing club park their boats and vehicles to the area for public space.

The Wharewaka building will have multiple functions within it. There will be two Waka stored within the building, a gallery, café, offices and meeting rooms. The building will have two accessible entries and a ceremonial ramp.

Comments & Questions:

There is a lack of accessible access to the water. It would be really good to have a 1:20 ramp across the existing stairs. *We could look at providing ramps and a concrete platform where the Waka come up.*

What is the difference between accessible walkways and non accessible? *There are routes that people may walk along that have steps and are therefore not accessible routes.*

When is this project due for completion? *At the end of the year with the Wharewaka being due for completion in December.*

It would be good if all the rooms in the Wharewaka could be equipped with hearing loops.

Will there be seats and handrails provided as handrails are important especially for Wellington wind conditions and elderly people? *No, there are not a lot of handrails in the design as all accessible routes are under 1:20. We are trying to keep handrails out of the design but a handrail will be provided on the ramp area. With regarding to seating there will only be a minimal amount for budget reasons.*

It would be good to have signage to say whether an area is not accessible. This could be a milestone with an accessibility symbol to indicate the accessibility of the route.

8. Co-Chair Report

The interview process for membership to the DRG has been completed and Philipa welcomed the new members to the group.

Does the DRG want to make a submission on the Draft Annual Plan? **Action:** All ideas to be circulated by email. Alan to collate the information. This information needs to be received by Alan no later than 4 May 2010.

Action: Stewart to circulate a list of last year's submission to the new members. Stewart to also email the list of new members including time served by existing members to the group.

9. Subgroups

There are four subgroups within the DRG including Transport and Urban Design; Housing; Cultural and Economic; Governance and ICT. New members need to indicate what groups they want to be part of. Due to time constraints, the goals for these groups will be decided at the next meeting.

Action: Stewart to circulate an email to the new members so they can indicate what groups they want to be part of. This is also to include information on the seven strategic areas of Council and a copy of last year's goals.

10. Accessibility Advisor

Accessibility Advisor's job description – no decision has been made on this at the moment. When will this be available? This could possibly be available for the next DRG meeting but Jenny Rains will need to discuss this with Stewart Sexton first.

Action: Stewart to send an email to the members introducing himself. Stewart will also email the Accessibility Advisor's workplan to members.

Action: Any further questions to be made to the presenters at this meeting need to be sent to either Stewart Sexton or Jenny Rains.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm
Next meeting is scheduled for: Tuesday, May 25th 2010 at 5:30 pm.