

3. The Environment We Work In

There are a number of key external and internal factors which will affect the way that education, information and recreation services can be provided in Wellington City.

3.1 Population Changes

Education, information and recreation services need to respond to population changes. These include age structure, cultural background, income levels and population distribution and movement. Wellington City's population is predicted to grow by about 7 percent over the next 10 years. Wellington's population is also increasingly mobile partly due to Capital City status. Wellingtonians are comparatively well educated and have high literacy rates. Cultural diversity is reflected in ethnic communities focused in geographic areas. It is important that Wellington City Libraries monitor population changes and how these affect the type of customer, their preferences, and the type and distribution of services.

3.2 Recreation/Leisure Preferences

Trends in recreational activities and preferences will affect the way people use services and the sorts of services that they need. Indications are that there is a rising popularity of individual self-directed and informal recreational pursuits as opposed to organised activities. Customers are also becoming more sophisticated and there is a demand for high standards of facilities and services.

While there has been high growth in the number of people who are computer literate, there will continue to be demand for traditional library uses such as reference and hard copy information and leisure reading. Wellington City Libraries need to be able to meet new demands as well as service a traditional customer base and those with special needs. Wellington City Libraries need to monitor changes in customer preferences through effective, accurate and timely market research and respond to this.

3.3 Lifelong Learning and Information Literacy

'The skills and knowledge needed to keep pace with globalisation and the knowledge economy may be different from the current skill set of many people. This is an accelerating trend and implies the need for all members of the community to engage in lifelong learning.' Education, information and recreation services provided by Wellington City Libraries are an important and complementary support for formal education services. In addition, as more and more information becomes accessible through changes in technology, library services play an increasingly important role in helping community members to remain information literate.

3.4 Changing Technology

Technology changes impact on the way people access and use information. For information to remain relevant (ie up to date and accessible) services need to keep pace with information technology changes. This is also important for the management of the libraries, as systems are dependent on technology. As the new technology environment is changing rapidly, Wellington City Libraries need to be able to forecast changes and their potential impacts in order to update systems and resources when necessary.

3.5 Economic Development

In an increasingly global and competitive economy, Council will continue to take a leadership role in economic development in the region. Knowledge and information are key factors which will assist the city in identifying opportunities and gaining a competitive advantage. The role of Wellington City Libraries is to support the economic development directions of the Council by providing access to information in key skill and knowledge areas, particularly where business clusters have been identified.

3.6 Location Factors

Education, information and recreation services, though technology enabled, will still need physical facilities, particularly if they are to continue to be community focus points. As there will be strong expectations from communities, any future decisions relating to the geographic distribution of, and major changes to, library facilities need to be undertaken with appropriate and thorough community consultation and assessed using the following criteria:

- population growth and change
- "help where it is needed", community needs and service gaps for the population as a whole as well as specific groups such as older people, children, young people, cultural and ethnic groups
- accessibility (geographically) including the availability of public transport
- proximity and availability of other services
- support for community and economic nodes
- costs
- potential for multi-use facilities, flexible services and the co-location of services
- potential for delivery of service by other means.

3.7 Government Legislation and Policy

Changes in Central government's policies will impact on local education, information and recreation services. Increasing emphasis on lifelong learning places more pressure on public libraries as important resources. There is an increasing demand for libraries to play a support role in the formal education system.

The Local Government Act gives Councils the power to establish libraries and a reference point for services and charges (Local Government Amendment Act 1979, Section 601).

3.8 Partnerships

Wellington City Libraries are working in an increasingly competitive environment particularly in information technology and recreation/leisure services. However this does offer the opportunity for partnerships in service delivery or in co-location of complementary services. Within Council this has resulted in some of the library branches being used as Customer Service Centres. Wellington City Council strongly supports the use of partnerships where possible to ensure cost effective and efficient delivery of the service and to avoid duplication. The 'Book on Wheels' programme is a good example of where working in partnerships provides improvements in service in a cost effective manner.

3.9 Other Libraries

Wellington City Libraries only operate in the Wellington City Council area. There are opportunities to build relationships with other council service providers in the region including Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt, Porirua and Kapiti Coast councils. In addition, as the nation's capital, Wellington also houses the National Library and National Archives as well as libraries attached to major education institutions such as Victoria and Massey Universities. Wellington City Libraries need to monitor any changes in other libraries' practices particularly those relating to access and range of services. The focus needs to be on partnerships and better services rather than duplication.

3.10 Community Relationship

Council's libraries are highly regarded by users and the general public. There is a high level of public 'ownership' of the facilities. This offers the opportunity for strong community involvement. Good community relationships are supported by:

- continued consultation with service users and non-users
- focus on meeting the needs of the community
- clear decision making process, including feedback on decisions and consistent with strategic direction and policy.

3.11 Funding the Services

Library infrastructure represents a significant resource investment by Council which, to be maintained and remain relevant, needs to be ongoing. These resources need to be funded while keeping a balance between income required by Council and people's ability to pay. Council also has limited resources and needs to use these wisely and effectively. Any decisions about funding services needs to reflect the Council Funding Policy, strategic direction and priorities and Asset Management Plan requirements.