
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY POLICY

1. Purpose of Report

This report requests the Committee to:

- consider feedback from the consultation undertaken on the e-Democracy and e-Community components of the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy
- refer the attached policy (Appendix 1) to Council for adoption. The policy will then be amended once the economic development component of the policy is developed and consulted on.

2. Executive Summary

Feedback has been received on the draft e-Democracy and e-Community components of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy. A targeted consultation process was undertaken concurrently with the draft Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) consultation, as the funding suggested to implement the policy was included in that document.

The majority of the feedback received supported the aims and objectives of both components of the policy as well as the projects that are being suggested to implement it. The main comments made on the draft policy were focused on:

- the implementation of the computer rooms, and ensuring they have appropriate levels of supervision, technical support and training opportunities for the users
- the Council's role in raising awareness of ICT and promoting ICT usage through ensuring relevant content is available
- ensuring that e-Community and e-Democracy initiatives are fully accessible to the disability community – particularly around providing accessibility technology and ensuring the accessibility of the website.

Changes have been made to the e-Community and e-Democracy components of the ICT Policy – to reflect the feedback (i.e. giving increased emphasis to some areas of the policy) as well as to better reflect the significant role public libraries may have in enabling the Council to meet the policy's aim. An updated version of the policy is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note that funding for the implementation of the e-Democracy and e-Community components of the draft Information and Communications Technology Policy is being considered separately as part of the 2006-2016 Long Term Council Community Plan.*
3. *Recommend that Council adopt the Information and Communications Technology Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) – noting that the economic development component of the policy will be an amendment to the policy once it is developed and consulted on.*
4. *Delegate to the Chief Executive and Portfolio Leaders (Social and Governance) the authority to make editorial changes to the “Policy Implementation” sections of the ICT Policy to reflect the outcome of the final LTCCP deliberations.*

4. Background

4.1 Council's ICT Policy

The draft ICT Policy has three components to it, which focus on how ICT can be used to:

- enhance the city's economic development
- enable community development in the city – particularly through building capability and capacity (e-Community)
- promote enhanced and increased participation in civic decision-making (e-Democracy).

This policy updates the InfoCity Strategy agreed to by the Council in 1995¹, taking into account the changes experienced since then not only in technology, but general attitudes to technology and user behaviour. The e-Democracy component is a new addition to the original strategy.

Only the e-Community and e-Democracy components of the ICT Policy have been developed to date.

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. It aims to ensure no one is excluded from the burgeoning “knowledge society” because of a lack of access to ICT or to the skills they need to use it.

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.

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

The economic development component of the policy will focus on such questions as what the Council's role is in facilitating access to fast, affordable broadband to the city's non-CBD areas. This component, however, has proven more complex to develop and has not reached a draft stage. This is mainly because of the high cost and risk associated with getting meaningful gains in the ICT infrastructure (particularly broadband) projects being considered in this area. 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.

5. Discussion

5.1 Consultation Process

Targeted community groups, organisations and interested individuals were sent copies of the draft policy for comment. The consultation was also advertised on the *Our Wellington* page of the Dominion Post and placed on the Council's website.

The consultation process was linked with the draft LTCCP consultation, as new initiatives to implement the policy were included in that document. The draft LTCCP document referred to the draft ICT Policy being available for feedback.

Those providing feedback via the website or feedback form were given the opportunity to provide additional comments and answer the following specific questions:

e-Community and e-Democracy

1. What do you think of the proposed aim and objectives of the policy?
2. What projects would you most like to see implemented under this policy?

e-Democracy

1. Do you think that you would be more likely to participate in the Council's decision-making processes if e-Democracy initiatives were provided?
2. What Council services would you most like to see available through the Council's website?

5.2 Overall results

25 submissions on ICT were received through the draft ICT Policy and draft LTCCP consultation processes. Ten of these submissions were from groups and organisations, with the remaining 15 being from individuals. The submissions are attached in Appendix 2.²

² A submission from Stan Andis has not been provided due to its length. The majority of the submission covered other issues in the LTCCP and only stated the following about potential broadband projects: "I am not sure how or why the Wellington City Council should be involved in Broadband trends. No funds should be dedicated to this."

A further two letters were received from residents of the Newtown Park and Arlington Flats complexes who were interested in finding out more about the coordinators of the new computer rooms.

Of the 25 feedback forms received, the different components of the ICT Policy were commented on as follows:

e-Community	21	(84%)
e-Democracy	11	(44%)
Economic Development*	3	(12%)

*This feedback was received via the draft LTCCP consultation, as reference to further work in this area was made in that document.

The following section provides a summary of the feedback received and officer response to that feedback.

5.3 e-Community

5.3.1 Policy aims and objectives

The majority of the feedback received on the e-Community component of the draft ICT Policy (21 submissions) supported the policy:

Support	18	(86%)
Do not support	2	(9%)
Undecided/unclear	1	(5%)

Support was given by two of the Council's key partners in this area – the Wellington 2020 Communications Trust (W2020) and Smart Newtown. SeniorNet (which works to enable older people to access ICT) also indicated their support and offered to work with the Council to support older disadvantaged people.

The following outlines the main issues raised and provides an officer response:

Issue raised	Response
<p>1. Disability/Accessibility Issues</p> <p>Concern that the Arlington Flats computer room will not be accessible from the Housing complex side.</p> <p>The Council needs to make adaptive accessible technology available in its computer rooms/hubs, as well as other community settings including libraries and community centres</p>	<p>A ramp is being installed for the computer room on the Housing complex side (the non-Taranaki St side of the room).</p> <p>The Central Library currently has screen reader and magnification software available. Staff are also looking into further magnifying equipment. Usage of the technology will be monitored, and staff will examine the community need for the technology, to determine if it will be rolled out to other libraries (particularly Kilbirnie and Newtown).</p>

<p>2. Support for the rooms</p> <p><i>Provision of trainers / facilitators</i> – Need to give better consideration to providing tutors/facilitators for the room</p> <p><i>Technical</i> Need someone on hand who can ensure the computers are working correctly.</p> <p><i>Supervision</i> This is required to ensure the equipment is not abused.</p>	<p>Providing training is one of the three stated objectives of the policy. Training in the proposed housing computer rooms will be facilitated through a “room/hub coordinator” – who will deliver the training and/or facilitate training opportunities (i.e. through such groups as SeniorNet, or specific refugee and migrants support groups).</p> <p>The above “room coordinator” will be expected to have sufficient technical knowledge to provide low-level technical support.</p> <p>This will also be the responsibility of the room coordinator, who will also be responsible for overseeing volunteers.</p> <p>Policy Change: Section 3.6 “Policy Implementation” now states that a “room coordinator” will be employed to oversee the room and volunteers, provide low level technical support and facilitate training opportunities.</p>
<p>3. Addressing all “barriers”</p> <p>The policy needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more emphasis on addressing other barriers to accessing ICT (e.g. “emotional/attitudinal” and “skills access” barriers as well as “usage” barriers). • more information about how the Council intends to raise awareness about the potential benefits of ICT – particularly amongst the identified target communities. 	<p>Given budget constraints, the policy’s implementation is targeted to overcoming the practical need of providing actual ICT access. It is envisaged that once the rooms are operational, activities to raise awareness around ICT (such as open days) and address other barriers will be possible.</p> <p>The person who fills the Community ICT Coordinator position will be tasked with looking into options for addressing “emotional/attitudinal” barriers in particular. This will probably focus on leveraging off other marketing tools the Council uses – such as the <i>APW</i> and advertising through <i>Our Wellington</i>. The Coordinator will also discuss the needs of different communities with members of those communities to ensure the relevance of any initiatives undertaken (the information provided in the submission from Eltahir Kabbar will also be useful in understanding how to target these communities).</p> <p>The room coordinator will also work to directly address “skills” barriers through providing training opportunities.</p>

<p>4. Providing content</p> <p>The policy needs to be more specific around how the Council will identify content that will motivate citizens to use ICT.</p>	<p>Unlike the Digital Strategy, “content” has not been identified as a key area for the Council’s involvement, although the Council does contribute to content creation through its support for the Wellington Community Net project. The libraries have also undertaken significant work in ensuring relevant content is available online. They provide free online access to over 6,000 government and information websites, including the Council’s website.</p> <p>Through the Community ICT Coordinator and the room coordinator(s), the Council will also work with organisations (WINZ, SeniorNet) to help design training around key information that the targeted users are likely to want to access.</p>
<p>5. Evaluation</p> <p>Ensure ongoing evaluation so that problems/gaps are identified early</p>	<p>This will be part of the role of the Community ICT Coordinator. This person will work with communities to determine their needs, as well as maintain an overview of the operation and success of the initiatives being undertaken.</p>
<p>6. Review</p> <p>The policy needs to be reviewed more regularly than every three years due to the rate of change in ICT.</p>	<p>Agree with the comments.</p> <p>Policy change: <i>Section 1.5 now refers to the policy being monitored and changed as necessary, and reviewed in full at least every three years.</i></p>
<p>7. Support for community organisations</p> <p>Suggestions were made that the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help organisations with keeping their ICT up-to-date • facilitate broadband access to organisations – particularly where they are co-located (i.e. the Community House on Willis St) • help community organisations provide ICT access to their clients 	<p>Community organisations are noted as a target “group” of the policy (section 3.5). The Council’s main support in this area comes from the provision of the Wellington Community Net facility.</p> <p>A needs assessment of community organisations is currently being undertaken through the Department of Internal Affairs. The results of this will help inform any further initiatives the Council considers undertaking in this area.</p> <p>The broadband question is discussed below in Section 5.5.</p>

<p>8. Sustainability</p> <p>Ensure projects are sustainable.</p>	<p>The Council is aware that this is a key issue, and it is a significant driver for the update/development of the policy. “Sustainability” has been identified as one of the principles of the policy, and the Council is currently considering providing funding for projects through the LTCCP.</p>
<p>9. e-Community priority</p> <p>The Council should give priority to the e-Community programme as it is needed to ensure people fully participate in e-Democracy.</p>	<p>Agree that the e-Community component is essential to the success of the e-Democracy component.</p> <p>Policy change: An additional statement about the link between the two components has been included in section 1.1.</p>
<p>10. Implementation of the housing computer rooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern raised that some housing complexes “miss out” on access to computers. • Would like to see computing hubs in the city too, not just the suburbs. • Should provide rooms for mobile community service providers (i.e. health, tax, legal advisors), which are internet enabled. • Need to canvass residents in the housing complexes regarding their needs, to ensure the rooms’ success 	<p>Budgetary constraints limit the number of initiatives the Council can implement. It is necessary to target areas where the most disadvantaged communities exist.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>This will be done by the Community ICT Coordinator.</p>

5.3.2 Projects to implement

Support was given to the projects outlined in the policy and the draft LTCCP document, which provides for the following:

- a Community ICT Coordinator (\$70,000)
- the installation of computer hubs in additional targeted suburbs, which could be undertaken in a number of community settings, including libraries and/or community centres (budget starting at \$76,000 in 2008/09 and incrementally increasing to \$209,000 in 2011/12)
- installing computer rooms in two housing complex (\$80,000 in operational expenditure and \$45,000 in capital expenditure)

Other projects suggested in the feedback were:

- Providing community access to broadband through access portals – leveraging off existing telecommunications services to provide citywide wireless internet access.

Response: This will be considered as part of the “Economic Development” component of the ICT Policy.

- Online communities – probably suburb based, enabling discussions, etc, and other community content.

Response: This initiative crosses with the e-Democracy component of the model and could be part of the evolving approach the Council is undertaking in this area.

5.3.3 Libraries

An increased reference to the role of public libraries has been made in the revised draft. This recognises the role that libraries have in enabling access to ICT and the role they do and may play in enabling the Council to meet the main aim of the policy.

The Council’s libraries are focused on being “local information centres”, enabling users to participate in information networks. This includes providing them with access to ICT and opportunities to obtain training. All of the libraries provide free access to over 6,000 internet sites, including the Council’s website and other government and information websites. Library staff are able to train customers on how to use the technology, particularly focusing on giving them the ability to retrieve the information they want. In two libraries this training extends to word-processing.

The new Tawa and Karori libraries also provide “clusters” of internet-enabled computers where small groups, and not just individuals, are able to access training. Such facilities are more difficult to provide in other Council libraries, however, where space may be limited.

The libraries role in the implementation of the ICT Policy will become increasingly important in the next few years, as a national trend towards increased technology usage in libraries becomes increasingly important to what users/customers expect from a library of the future. Of particular significance is the potential “People’s Network” being undertaken by the National Library in collaboration with a number of partners. The project is seeking funding to undertake a feasibility study on providing free computer and internet access, including appropriate training, across New Zealand’s public library network. For this reason, officers support regular monitoring of the policy to make sure it is kept up-to-date with potential developments.

5.3.4 Community Partnership Fund

The Council has made an application to the government’s Community Partnership Fund (an initiative provided to support the Digital Strategy) in relation to the proposed housing complex computer rooms initiative. As of the completion of this paper, no information had been obtained as to the success of this application.

5.4 e-Democracy

5.4.1 Policy Aims and Objectives

The majority of the feedback received on the e-Democracy component of the draft ICT Policy (11 submissions) supported the policy:

Support	8
Do not support	2
Undecided/unclear	1

Some of this support was qualified. For example, one supporter stated that they thought it was for the future as it would “be along time before a significant number of people become involved”.

The following outlines the main issues raised and the officer response:

Issue raised	Response
<p>1. Management of the Initiatives</p> <p>This initiative would need to be well-managed – with dedicated officers ensuring the initiatives function well.</p>	<p>Agree with comment. Section 4.5 states that the initiatives will be supported with increased officer resources to ensure they are supported effectively.</p>
<p>2. Website Accessibility</p> <p>Request for non-PDF documents to be made available, as reader programmes are available for non-PDF documents.</p> <p>The website needs simpler language for people with literacy issues.</p> <p>The website is difficult to read – concerned with the colours used on the website, as “light wording on a light background” is difficult to read.</p>	<p>The Web Centre is looking into providing word documents as well as PDF documents online. This might not be able to be done retrospectively, however, as the site currently supports over 6,000 PDF documents.</p> <p>The Web Centre currently has a full-time Web Editor who ensures that the information provided is aimed at a reading age of 11 years old. The editor also removes technical language/jargon, as far as is possible.</p> <p>The Web Centre has not received any other complaints about this. It will continue to monitor the feedback it receives to see if any further action is required.</p>

<p>3. Feedback facilities</p> <p>The Council should recognise that some people still prefer face-to-face contact.</p>	<p>Agree that e-Democracy is just one way to encourage participation. Section 4.2 of the policy states that e-Democracy will only be used to complement conventional forms of participation rather than replace them.</p>
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5.4.2 Council Website

Accessibility

The Web Centre currently undertakes a substantial amount of work to ensure the accessibility of the website, and an accessibility strategy has been added to the Council's internal Web Strategy (more information on this strategy is provided in Appendix 3).

All of the Web Centre staff attend accessibility training courses, and are considering hiring a private accessibility expert to provide indepth training for coders. The Council also consults with the e-Govt Unit of the State Services Commission and the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind.

New projects

The Web Centre is currently working on a number of projects to increase the functionality of the website, including:

- webmaps
- a heritage inventory
- a development contributions online calculator.

5.4.3 Projects to implement

Support was given to the projects outlined in the policy and the draft LTCCP document, which provides \$55,000 of new funding for projects such as e-Petitions, e-Panels and e-Public participation.

A suggestion was made to promote the current online submission facility better. Limited support was also indicated for discussion forums, voting, providing information in multiple languages and providing elected members' websites and/or web logs.

5.4.4 Council services

Suggestions for other online Council services that people would like to see are in fact ones that are already available online:

- feedback forms
- information about what's happening
- recreation – cycling, walking, transport services, council plans and activities.

One submission recognised that there is already “a lot of information of value to citizens” online, although new suggestions of what people would most like to see included traffic reports and communication with elected members.

5.5 Broadband

Three submissions were made to the draft LTCCP in response to comments about “better connecting” the city through its telecommunications infrastructure – particularly around facilitating access to broadband.

Submissions from the Ministry of Economic Development and InternetNZ encourage the Council to consider facilitating greater access to broadband in the city because of the importance of broadband as a critical infrastructure that can benefit communities’ economic and social well-being. The other submission was against the Council being involved in broadband and dedicating funds to it.

The issues raised in these submissions will be considered through the further development of the policy that is to take place before the end of this year. Officers’ investigations will include looking into how recently announced regulatory changes (particularly local loop unbundling) could impact the city’s broadband provision and the options outlined in the letter from the Ministry of Economic Development, e.g.:

- requiring subdivision developers to lay fibre in new subdivisions
- installing ducting for fibre when roads are open (including encouraging utilities and our roading department to coordinate works)
- allowing open access to ducting (including providing access to redundant services).

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.

6. Conclusion

The e-Community and e-Democracy components of the ICT Policy have been changed to reflect feedback provided on the policy. An updated version of the policy is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee’s consideration.

Contact Officer: *Adele Gibson, Policy Adviser*

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The e-Community component of the ICT Policy fits under the Council's proposed draft Social Strategy, which is being considered by the Council as part of its 2006-2016 LTCCP process.

The e-Democracy component of the policy fits with the Council's draft Governance Strategy, which is being considered by the Council through the 2006-2016 LTCCP process.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The following projects are being considered by the Council through the 2006-16 LTCCP process:

e-Community C592

e-Democracy C668

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Members of the Maori community will fall into the target groups outlined as part of the e-Community policy, as well as the "hard-to-reach" groups identified in the e-Democracy policy.

4) Decision-Making

This report does not require the Committee to make a "significant" decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

The consultation process undertaken is the subject of this report.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana whenua and the wider Maori community will be consulted.

6) Legal Implications

Not applicable.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The ICT Policy will provide the Council with an update of the InfoCity Strategy adopted by the Council in 1995. The ICT Policy will be consistent with other current Council policies.

APPENDIX 1

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY POLICY

APPENDIX 2

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

APPENDIX 3

Accessibility in the Council's internal Web Strategy

In ensuring accessibility, the Web Centre refers to:

- W3C Web Accessibility Guidelines (WAI)
- NZ Government Web Guidelines
- UK Government Web Accessibility Guidelines

W3C/WAI has set standards to aim for, with its 1,2 and 3 priority groupings. The Council's website meets the majority of requirements for priority 1, and many of the priorities in 2 and 3. As part of the website's ongoing maintenance and development, code amendments will gradually be made to meet requirements wherever possible, noting the difficulty of doing this due to the complexity and size of the website (i.e. the site has over 3000 html pages, 13,000 internal and external links and over 6,000 PDFs).

The current staged approach ensures the following:

- All copy on the site is edited specifically for the web by an experienced, skilled Web Editor
- Any invalid code is being reformatted to validate against W3C standards
- Code is being amended to improve site accessibility. Examples:
- All images, including spacer images, are being given appropriate alt tags
- Users are being informed when links open new window or PDF
- Content tables are being given relevant document structure
- New PDF files are being tagged and bookmarked

In the future staged approach:

- Access keys will be added
- Metadata will be expanded
- 'Skip to content' links will be added
- Forms will have label, fieldset and legend attributes.

The Web Centre will also:

- investigate the addition of video clips/audio clips
- investigate using FlashPaper as an alternative format to PDFs (may have improved accessibility features)
- work to keep up-to-date with accessibility developments and to be aware of accessibility web needs