

DISABILITY REFERENCE GROUP (DRG)

MINUTES

5.00 PM

Tuesday 6 March 2007

Committee Room Two

Attending

Kendall Akhurst (Co-Chair)

Thomas Bryan (Co-Chair)

Ollie Goulden

Ross Livingstone

Nick Luger

Rosie Macleod

John McGrath

Kaeti Riggardsford

Mehaka Rowntree

Jules Taniwha

Sandy Waddell

Wendy Walker

Michael Webster

Lisette Wesseling

1. Welcome

The Joint Chairs welcomed the group and then each person present at the meeting briefly introduced themselves.

2. Apologies

Leonie Gill (Councillor)

Jenny Rains

3. Introduction from Wendy Walker, Director Community Services

Wendy Walker explained to the group the structure of the Community Services Directorate and then briefly described each business unit within the Directorate including their responsibilities, goals, and recent developments.

City Housing has a staff of 20 who manage 2500 housing units for 4000 tenants in Wellington City. The housing is targeted at people on low incomes living in Wellington. Central Government has recently contributed \$220 million dollars and Wellington City Council has confirmed that it will be involved in providing social housing for the next 30 years.

City Safety has a staff of two people. This business unit focuses on promoting safety in public places. At present the issues surrounding involvement in the promotion of safety in the domestic and family environments is being explored.

Libraries have 11 branches around the city. This business unit focuses on meeting the changing need of Wellington's diverse population, including improving people's access to information and recreational reading.

The Treaty Relations Business Unit has two staff and has a memorandum of understanding with local Iwi.

The Grants business unit has recently overhauled its system. Grants can now be applied for at regular intervals during the year.

The Arts business unit is a new initiative and is forming at present.

The City Communities business unit engages with communities in the city on behalf of Council. The DRG was given as an example of how such engagement is facilitated.

4. Introduction from John McGrath, Director of Policy

John McGrath explained how the policy unit in Council operates. It was explained that the unit has 10 policy advisors and one administrator. The work embarked upon encompasses a wide area of topics. The purpose of the policy unit was explained, its organisational relationships, how work is selected, highlights from 2006, how the unit engages and consults with other groups and intended work for 2007.

The group asked if the issue of older people and the use of mobility scooters in the city and suburban centres would be addressed by the policy unit, especially in relation to the rising number of older people. It was answered that part of the upcoming policy work includes working on a walking plan, a cycle plan and the use of public transport. This planned work load aims to address how to encourage people to move away from the use of private transport.

The group also questioned whether or not the policy unit had any plan to deal with policy regarding internal employment of people with disabilities (within the Wellington City Council). The answer given was that internal practices are not part of the policy unit's brief. The unit's brief is applied to the external political environment.

The group also asked what influence the policy unit has with Metlink. The answer given was that the policy unit has a working relationship with Metlink and that desired outcomes for transport are pursued through this avenue. The follow up question asked by the group regarded the implementation of new bus ticketing machines and their level of accessibility. The answer given

was that this issue was something to add to the unit's list of issues to follow up on.

Staying on the transportation theme the group then raised the issue of accessibility of train platforms and the lack of assistance from conductors. The answer given was that these best practice concerns can be raised at the next policy meeting and followed up through the working relationship that the policy unit has with relevant transport bodies.

5. Introduction from Michael Webster, City Secretary, Democratic Services

Michael Webster explained the process involved in how different things are achieved at Wellington City Council. This explanation included that role of local government, its local focus, that which it is required to do due to legislation and what it does not do, and at the same time, what it can become involved in.

The governance and representative role of councillors was explained, as was the roles of the Chief Executive Officer and Wellington City Council Staff. The five ward 14 councillor electoral system was explained followed by governance structures and processes. Council Controlled Organisations and their relationship to Council was explained followed by ways that the community can have input into the decision making process of Council with the note made that the key to effective input is engagement at the beginning of the process.

The group asked what is being done to ensure that voting as well as information (both printed and online resources) will be made accessible. The answer given was that contact will be made with Wellington City Council's electoral officer and feedback will be available at the DRG meeting scheduled for the 10th April 2007.

The group also questioned how voting would be conducted. The answer given was that voters will vote via post. As yet it is not final if libraries and the lobby of Wellington City Council will open for walk in votes on the last day of voting.

6. Introduction from Mehaka Rowntree, Planning and Research

Mehaka Rowntree explained how the Planning and Research business unit functions. There are four staff members and their purpose is to translate Council's strategies, make plans and finally put these plans into action.

The 10 year Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) sets out the Council's work programme for 10 years. The Planning and Research unit is involved in the three year policy plan as well as the annual plan. One month of the year the planning and research unit engages in community consultation on all draft documents. The date for this year's consultation is from mid April to mid May. A representative from the Planning and Research unit will return

in the May meeting for the DRG to discuss this year's draft plan with the group.

The group also questioned what was being done to ensure that the information about the draft plan was being made accessible for people of the deaf blind community. It was answered that accessible options for the said information would be followed up on.

7. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the DRG meeting of Tuesday 12th December 2006 were passed.

8. Other Business

- The Kumutoto Open Space Project was discussed by the group. It was reported to the group that following the last meeting on Tuesday 12th December 2006, Positively Wellington Waterfront (the Council Controlled Organisation responsible for the project) has agreed to the suggestions made by the DRG regarding the inclusion of ramps, colour contrasts, hand rails, and the gradient will now be one and fifteen (as opposed to the previous one and twelve). Positively Wellington Waterfront has not approved the DRG request for accessible ramps to the water's edge. The group then discussed the need for full access given that the space will be public. This access would include accessible ramps to the water's edge. The group also discussed the need for tactile indication before steps. The need for suitable illumination throughout the area was also discussed by the group, given that people are expected to access this public space, regardless of the time of day.
- The upcoming DRG meeting on Friday 9th March 2007 was discussed. At that time the terms of reference for the DRG will be discussed.
- A question was raised concerning brail bus stop signs. It was answered that some have already been installed and that more brail signs will appear as new bus stop signs are installed.
- The group then had the opportunity to more fully introduce themselves to the other members of the groups.
- The issue was then raised concerning the response transport providers take toward helping people with disabilities access public transport. The group mooted the idea of reviewing Australian policy in relation to this issue. The group also mooted the idea of attending more public meetings to have input into this issue. Finally the group decided that the DRG should approach INFRATIL (the owner of the buses in central Wellington) regarding what level of advice the DRG could contribute.

Meeting Closed