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Committee Regional Sustainability
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Report from the Divisional Manager, Wellington Regional Strategy

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) Office activities of relevance to Greater Wellington, in particular the Genuine Progress Index, broadband and urban design projects.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Genuine Progress Index (GPI)

One of the key elements of the WRS is sustainable economic growth. Page 51 of the document sets out how the Strategy will be monitored, utilising a GPI. It should be recognised that the GPI is not the only tool for monitoring the success of the WRS, and that there are aspects of the strategy that are unable to be quantified such as the value of inter-agency collaboration and information sharing.

The GPI working group, made up of officer representatives from each of the councils in the region (one Wairarapa representative), has drawn on the background research and analysis of GPI for the Wellington region that took place in 2005. The working group has also assessed many GPI frameworks being utilised around the world, including the draft New Zealand national-level GPI due to be released shortly by Massey University/NZ Centre for Ecological Economics/Market Economics/Landcare NZ.

Statistics New Zealand has recently released its Framework for Monitoring Sustainable Development. This framework discusses definitions of sustainability and comments on how complex it is to provide a comprehensive mechanism for measuring sustainable development.

Through the development of the GPI, the working group has been in liaison with both Statistics NZ and the NZ Centre for Ecological Economics.

3.1 GPI approach and framework

The GPI working group has determined that the framework for a regional GPI is to be based on the **WRS Outcomes**. These outcomes are high level outcomes that embody a range of aspirations for the region that are aimed at underpinning the goals of the WRS for Wellington to become an “internationally competitive” region. The WRS outcomes were agreed on by all the region’s councils and the public through the development and consultation stages of the WRS, and are almost identical to the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) community outcomes for Greater Wellington Regional Council.

There is an opportunity for the region’s GPI to be developed in such a way that it can eventually replace the monitoring of regional LTCCP community outcomes. Many other regional councils are also interested in determining how to align their community outcomes with a GPI and to deliver a fuller picture for measuring the well-being of their region. This could lead to a new model for monitoring and reporting on community outcomes at a regional level.

It is planned that the Wellington region GPI will have the ability to be built on and further developed over time. Its main focus is to provide a regional picture. Where appropriate, indicators in the GPI may be able to be aggregated up or disaggregated to a territorial authority level. The GPI is not intended to replace any territorial authority LTCCP community outcomes process, but has the potential to provide a useful baseline for individual councils when selecting core indicators.

The GPI working group has determined a two-phase process for developing the GPI.

Phase 1: development of a GPI monitoring framework

Phase 2: undertaking full cost accounting of selected accounts (decision to proceed yet to be decided).

Indicators used in the Wellington region GPI will largely come from existing sources (e.g. Statistics New Zealand, Quality of Life survey, Ministry of Social Development Social Report, Ministry of Health surveys).

Traditionally GPIs have not been regarded as measures of sustainable development. Their main purpose has been as a measure of well-being. Since the WRS is a sustainable development strategy the aim is to potentially broaden the GPI for the Wellington region to move it closer to measuring sustainable development where possible. We are aiming to do this by assessing the indicators against the Statistics New Zealand sustainable development framework indicator typology. Where appropriate additional indicators may need to be added to move it in this direction.

In addition we are aiming to be able to benchmark this GPI against other New Zealand regional council community outcome indicators. We intend to do this by developing a common set of indicators that each of the regions is comfortable using for this purpose. Work is already underway to develop a common set of indicators for regional councils.

3.2 Tangata Whenua involvement

The inclusion of Maori specific measures (recognising the special role of Tangata Whenua in the Wellington region) has been discussed with Ara Tahī at its 24 June meeting and also at a workshop held in August 2008. As representatives of the region's iwi, Ara Tahī are very interested in the development of the GPI and have recommended that tangata whenua-specific indicators be included.

A report was provided to Ara Tahī on 15 October seeking confirmation of the key topics for tangata whenua-specific issues to be included in the GPI. The GPI working group will provide recommendations on tangata whenua-specific indicators to Ara Tahī at its 4 December 2008 meeting.

The GPI working group continues to seek advice from Greater Wellington's iwi liaison officers (one of whom is a member of SORT) on the development of the cultural indicators part of the GPI.

3.3 Phase I output

The GPI (Phase 1) will allow progress towards the WRS outcomes to be monitored. There are a variety of ways that the indicator results can be represented. Figure 1 below represents the 'full' results of all topics included in the 1999 Alberta, Canada GPI. Each individual year can be represented in such a way to display 'performance'. In this example, each indicator is assessed against the best year, with better performance closer to the outside of the circle.

In the case of the Wellington regional GPI we could "roll up" the indicators into each of the WRS outcome areas.

Figure 8: Alberta GPI Sustainability Circle Index for 1999

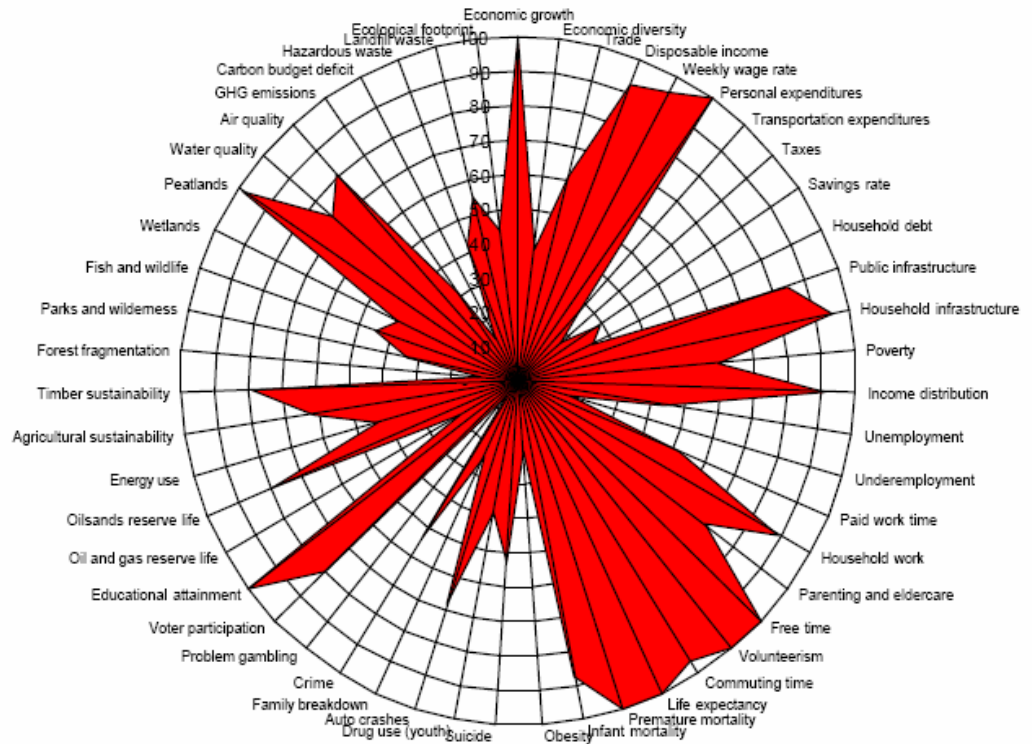


Figure 1: Example of Alberta GPI circle index

Another way that indicator performance can be presented is in the form of a report card (see Figure 2). In this model the raw data for each indicator is indexed to its most favourable year in the time series. For example, if unemployment is lowest in the region (a desirable result) in 2006 it is given a value of 100 and the other data points for that indicator is compared to that value.

This allows for dissimilar indicators to be aggregated to an overall index value as comparisons over time to be made.

Table 7: The Alberta GPI Sustainability Condition Report Card for 1999 and Well-being Trends, 1961 to 1999








ECONOMIC WELL-BEING Genuine Progress Indicators	GPI Condition Index in 1999 (100 = best) (0 = worst)	Highest Index Year / Worst Index Year*	Trend in the GPI variable 1961-1999	Description of Trend
Economic growth (real GDP per capita)	100	1999 1961*		The economy (real GDP, 1998\$) grew 400% in 40 years, representing a growth rate of 4.4% per annum or 2.2% per capita.
Economic diversity (distribution of GDP)	38	1971 1983*		Alberta's economy was more diversified in 1999 than in 1985 but less diversified than in 1971.
Trade balance (exports less imports)	61	1996 1971*		The balance of exports to imports has been variable, though slightly improved.
Real disposable income	92	1981 1961*		Higher than in the 1960s and 1970s but virtually unchanged since 1984.
Real weekly wage rate	95	1982 1964*		Real weekly wages while higher in 1999 compared to the 1960s have been stagnant since 1984.
Personal consumption expenditures	100	1999 1961*		Real spending per capita grew at 2.0% per annum.
Transportation expenditures	26	1961 1997*		Real transportation expenditures per capita are growing at 3.8% per year.

Figure 2: Example of Alberta GPI report card

3.4 Timeline

It is proposed that Phase 1 (including decisions on weighting of indicators, indicator type and number, rules for aggregation, assumptions around reporting on topic levels, peer review process, frequency of reporting on GPI) be signed off by the WRS Committee in early 2009.

A decision on whether or not to proceed with Phase 2 (full cost accounting) and the process for selecting accounts will also be made in early 2009.

4. Broadband

A Wellington Region Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Broadband Investment Fund was submitted on 30 September. Our “investment partners”, Smartlinx 3 and CityLink, co-signed the EOI document.

We received confirmation on 6th November that the EOI has been successful, and that we can proceed with a full application. Work is now underway to complete the application by the due date of 28 February, 2009.

The change in government following the General Election may alter the nature of the Broadband Investment Fund. Officers will continue setting up the structures and policies needed to move the Wellington region broadband

project forward under the current fund “rules”. Any changes to the fund will be responded to if and when those changes arise.

Six workstreams are now underway, some with very tight timeframes.

4.1 Business Case

A business case to support the final application is being developed. Initial work has been completed on this as part of the EOI process. This included a stocktake of the region’s broadband infrastructure and services.

4.2 Regional Broadband Plan

A Regional Broadband Plan is being prepared. It will explicitly set out the region’s goals for broadband and will support the final application. The plan will be presented to the December meeting of the WRS Committee for adoption.

4.3 Broadband Uptake Strategy

Grow Wellington is responsible for growing the uptake of broadband in the region. Council officers are working with Grow Wellington to prepare a strategy that outlines how the uptake of broadband, especially to support economic growth, will be achieved.

4.4 Establishment of Wellington Region Broadband Company

The EOI outlined that a council-owned company would be established to manage Wellington regional broadband development. All the region’s territorial authorities would be represented by the company through a joint Council Controlled Organisation. Greater Wellington may also have a role in the company. This matter will be discussed with Councillors over the next few weeks.

4.5 Broadband Investment Fund Application

The application itself will be prepared over the next 2 months. This will need to receive the support of the WRS Committee in early February, as well as the sign-off by the Councils and “investment partners”.

4.6 Review of Planning Controls and Use of Council Assets

It was agreed at the Chief Executive’s meeting on 10 October that council officers will develop a common policy position on the use of existing council assets and deployment technologies such as shallow trenching. This is on the basis that they are used for open access infrastructure. The New Zealand Transport Agency (State Highway managers) and OnTrack will also be invited to discuss options for enabling cheaper and faster deployment methods.

In addition, policy changes to facilitate new infrastructure may be needed. Officers will investigate the feasibility of consistent resource management rules (in District Plans) for telecommunications infrastructure throughout the

region, such as better aligned processes and conditions for “greenfield” and “brownfield” developments.

5. Urban Design

In September the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) released a discussion paper: “*Building Sustainable Urban Communities – A discussion document exploring place-based approaches to sustainable urban development in New Zealand*”. The paper outlines options to help achieve better urban development. Some of the options explored in the paper have implications for councils, both in the way they plan for urban development and how they undertake development themselves (or could act as a developer).

The discussion paper has been prepared by the Sustainable Urban Development Unit, Department of Internal Affairs and follows work previously carried out by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Senior Officer Resource Team (SORT) was involved in discussions with officials in the early stages of the project.

A number of options have been explored in the discussion paper including:

- The role of government in urban development
- Improving co-ordination and integration
- Funding
- Land assembly
- Streamlining planning processes
- Housing supply, choice and affordability

SORT is working with the Chief Executives to prepare a response from the region on the paper. We anticipate a final draft being presented to the WRS Committee for approval at the 10 December meeting.

6. WRS Summit

A WRS Summit is to be held on 14 November 2008 at the Chaffers Dock Atrium. In previous years this gathering was called the Strategic Partners Forum. It is a chance to give an update on progress on the Wellington Regional Strategy and to create an opportunity for attendees to explore key issues and opportunities facing the region. It is anticipated that 100 people will be attending.

Given the growing concerns about the current global economic conditions, and the potential for these conditions to worsen, the summit will provide a very timely opportunity for regional leaders to discuss this region’s response.

7. WRS Resourcing

Resourcing of WRS council-led projects has been identified as an issue by members of SORT. It appears that for a number of the region's councils providing on-going resources to progress WRS projects has been difficult.

The following projects have been identified as having regional significance and need commitment regionally to progress them:

- Genuine Progress Index
- Broadband
- Urban Design
- Industrial Land
- Rural/Residential Development
- Open spaces

These projects are being led by various senior officers from the councils around the region or by the WRS Office. The Chief Executives have considered several options relating to the resourcing issue and have agreed to find additional resources to fund projects their councils are responsible for.

As agreed by the Chief Executives, the following projects are to be handled in a slightly different way than previously envisaged. A forum for sharing knowledge and experience will be established for each project so that councils can inform each other about how their work reflects the WRS principles and what best practice in these areas might look like.

- Centres/Big box retail
- Affordable housing
- Integrated transport and land use
- Sub-division code of practice
- Intensification

8. Communication

Projects and other activities will continue to be communicated as the opportunity arises.

9. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. **Receives** the report.*
- 2. **Notes** the content of the report.*

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