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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
from Andrew Cutler, Strategic Communication Manager

Communication Strategy / Brand Review - Update

1. **Purpose**

To provide the Committee with an update on the development of Corporate and Divisional Communication Strategies, and the process for reviewing the Council's Brand Identity.

2. **Background**

The Committee will be aware that in the last triennium some progress was made towards the development of a Communication Strategy. For several reasons, including staff changes and the proximity of local body elections, progress on developing a strategy halted in mid-2001

In order to restart the process, several projects were initiated in the last quarter of 2001 to develop Corporate and Divisional Communication Strategies, and to begin the review of our Brand Identity. This work has now reached the stage where the input of the new Council is needed. The process adopted is described in points 3 A, B and C following.

3. **Comment**

Development of an organisation-wide Communication Strategy has been hampered by the difficulty of developing themes that account for the diversity and complexity of the Council's activities. Therefore the following process has been put in place to build a strategy from the top down – and the bottom up, accounting for divisional variety as well as the need for common themes.

The process will build up communication strategies for each division that have a common structure and that can be put into place for the 2002/03 financial year. The common structure of the strategies means that the overall themes and messages, being developed in the review of Brand Identity, can quickly be incorporated across the organisation.

- A. Review of the Council's Brand Identity. This is the "top-down" part of the strategy process.

A recommendation was made to the previous Council to undertake a review of the organisation's Brand Identity. In November 2001 we engaged local companies "emdesign" and "The Presence" to assist in this review. In December 2001 they began a process of research and consultation with staff to identify the existing brand values (the meaning and purpose of the organisation). The internal research process will be completed in February, and the results will be brought to a workshop prior to any decisions being made.

The review of the Brand Identity will develop the overall themes and messages for the organisation's communication. In the 2002/03 financial year these themes and messages will be incorporated in the divisional communication strategies currently under development. In future years the themes will shape the divisional strategies as they are prepared.

The review of the Brand Identity does not predetermine that the organisation will change its logo or name. That decision rests with Council. Because it has been more than twelve years since the existing brand was developed, and given changes since then it is an appropriate time to undertake a review.

- B. Development of a communication strategy for each functional area. This is the "bottom-up" part of the project.

Each communication strategy is based on the Division's business plan, and is focused on communicating with its key stakeholders and publics. The strategies use a standard format, that focus on the following communication objectives:

- Raising public awareness of issues and increasing access to information about what the Council does.
- Improving the Council's contact with stakeholders.
- Helping the public to adopt sustainable behaviours – for example, using public transport or conserving water.

The status of work on Divisional strategies is as follows.

- Transport Division – draft strategy complete.
- Landcare Division – draft strategy with Division for consultation.
- Utility Services Division – strategy in preparation.
- Wairarapa / Environment Division – preliminary discussions underway with Divisional Managers.

It is proposed that Divisional Strategies are completed in the second quarter of 2002, following approval by each standing Committee.

The development of Divisional Strategies does not pre-empt the development of a Corporate Strategy, or the development of overall themes and messages through the brand review.

- Divisional strategies focus on communicating the activities in the business plan. This has to be done anyway, regardless of the results of the corporate strategy.
- The work done in each strategy to identify stakeholders, issues and projects would need to be done anyway as part of developing the corporate strategy.
- Place has been left in each Divisional Strategy for the inclusion of corporate themes, once the Brand Review has been completed.

Lastly, it is important to note that Divisions are currently operating without communication strategies, making it difficult to plan and budget for activities. The implementation of strategies for the 2002/03 financial year will rectify this situation, and will form the basis for the first annual review in 2003 at which point the Corporate Strategy will provide strong direction.

C. Development of a Corporate Strategy.

The development of an overall Corporate Strategy follows from the review of the Brand Identity and the development of Divisional Strategies.

- The review of the Brand Identity will define key messages and themes for the whole organisation.
- The Divisional Strategies will identify stakeholders, issues and major business issues.

Once this work has been done, the Corporate Strategy can be completed.

- The Corporate Strategy will ensure that the Council's communications are consistent and integrated, and that key themes are reflected in communications across Divisions.
- The Corporate Strategy will identify issues and themes that require specific communication or marketing campaigns (for example, raising awareness of sustainable development).

It is proposed that the Corporate Strategy be completed in the second quarter of 2002.

4. **Conclusion**

This report has provided a brief overview of the Communication Strategy development process. An opportunity for a fuller discussion of this process and the review of the Brand Identity has been scheduled for a workshop. At that workshop the following points will be covered in more detail:

Brand Identity Review

- Introduction to the consultants undertaking the review of the Brand Identity.
- The process for reviewing the Brand Identity, and brief feedback on what has been learnt so far.
- Budget / Cost of the review.

Communication Strategy

- Linkages between the review of the Brand Identity, Divisional and Corporate Strategies.
- The content and structure of divisional strategies.

5. **Recommendation**

That the report be received and the contents noted.

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