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Committee Council
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Committee
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and Strategy

Report on the Regional Sustainability Committee Meeting held on 3 September 2008

1. Purpose

To inform Council about the meeting of the Regional Sustainability Committee that took place on 3 September 2008.

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. Report

In public participation, Mayor Adrienne Staples, South Wairarapa District Council, talked about the Greening Greytown initiative. She said that the feedback she had received was “all positive”, particularly from schools. Mayor Staples said that she is in no doubt that this is where we have to concentrate if we are to “make a difference” as children have a great influence on their parents.

The only negative comments she had received were that not all businesses had been involved. If the event is repeated, we need to ensure that there is 100% involvement. Also some prize winners had not received their prizes. (Matt Velde, GW was able to respond to this saying that he had reminded EECA to provide the prize in question and it was now underway.)

Mayor Staples said, from a South Wairarapa District Council perspective, it was an excellent opportunity to work with Greater Wellington and she saw the whole event as iconic, particularly the wheelbarrow race. Mayor Staples

considered that the event had sufficient impetus to be run for at least the next couple of years, but thought that if it was expanded to cover other areas, e.g. Carterton and/or Featherston, there was a risk that it would be “watered down”.

Mayor Staples commented that one of the reasons that Greening Greytown was successful was that it was fun and we should take care not to be “big brother” in trying to get messages across. She said that, if the event were to be repeated, Greater Wellington would certainly get support from the South Wairarapa District Council and community boards. The Committee agreed that further consideration should be given to what Greater Wellington should do in this context next year.

Then Helen Dew and Sonia Corbett from Transition Towns spoke about the Greytown event saying they were pleased to have been involved. They reinforced Mayor Staples’ comments about businesses and schools, but said they would like to see it extended over Wairarapa as we could then take advantages of the synergies between areas. They also thought that the event should have a theme, e.g., food, energy, water, as “sustainability” was too broad and a theme would re-inforce Greater Wellington’s *Be the Difference* programme.

They said they would like to see a steering group of local people involved at the beginning, composed of all interested parties.

There was discussion about the pros and cons of expanding the event and about the extent to which people had changed their behaviours in the long-term. The need for proper evaluation was raised by Councillor Donaldson.

Helen and Sonia also talked about the Transition Towns movement in general.

Matt Velde, Senior Communications Advisor, Greater Wellington, then explained how the event had originated from the celebration of World Environment Day. There perhaps could have been better communication and information, but this was limited by time constraints - there had only been a month to put the programme together, on the basis of a grant from the Ministry for the Environment at short notice. He commented that the event had created goodwill about Greater Wellington in the community and that there was now interest from other areas in the region for a similar event. In particular, Matt thought the event had highlighted the positive relationship Greater Wellington has with schools and had been a good example of partnering.

A discussion ensued about whether the event should be repeated and, if so, how it should be funded. Councillor Buchanan commented that this programme was focused on household sustainability and, as a Council, we have not yet addressed our role in this regard, particularly in relation to our main role of land sustainability. He questioned whether it was Greater Wellington’s role to lead these events, saying that we shouldn’t be “in the game” unless there was a local leadership team to drive the event.

Geoff Skene, Manager, Environmental Education, ran through the results of the survey that was undertaken after Greening Greytown. His presentation has been put in the Councillors' Information Bulletin.

Next Laurence Greig, Grow Wellington, gave a presentation on "Centres of Excellence", a copy of which has also been put in the Councillors' Information Bulletin. He talked about the reasons for Centres of Excellence, the areas that had been chosen (Sustainable and Renewable Energy, Screen and Digital Technologies, Human Therapeutics Biotechnology and Natural Hazards Resilience) and their potential significance to the region's future economy. Laurence then concentrated on the "Sustainable and Renewable Energy" work.

In discussion, the question of what Greater Wellington can do to protect the security of prime areas off the south coast of Wellington for tidal energy evaluation and possible development was raised and it was agreed that reference to the Coastal Policy Statement would be important in this context. The opportunity for collaboration in regard to the natural hazards work was also highlighted, particularly with the Lifelines Group and local government emergency management and natural hazards work.

Geoff Skene then gave a presentation on Greater Wellington's *Take Action for Water and Take Action for Air* school programmes, showing the activities of schools and the many links with other organisations and the community. He commented that at least 20 schools a year went through the programme (mainly the 9-12 age groups) and that the demand was greater than budget. An important component of the programme was the training of teachers. Past assessments of the programme have shown that it was liked by both school children and their teachers and that the learning was good. However, in an effort to evaluate the programme better, activities now have identified success factors attached to enable Greater Wellington staff to work with teachers to ensure that these factors are achieved. A copy of Geoff's presentation has been included in the Councillors' Information Bulletin.

Finally, Roger Archibald, Greater Wellington's Sustainable Business Facilitator, provided an update on developments in business sustainability. Roger explained that he was the only Sustainable Business Facilitator in the region and, as such, received many requests from other local authorities. As the Envirosmart programme is being discontinued, a new programme *E-missions* has been developed and will be delivered in partnership with a number of other agencies, initially for one year. The Ministry for Economic Development is a key partner in the programme. Businesses are keen to be involved as they want to reduce their footprint and get some verification of their green credentials so they can take advantage of central government's procurement policies.

The Committee's discussion initially focussed on the worth of developing a programme for 30 businesses a year and whether or not Greater Wellington could use our leverage to greater effect. However, the point was made that territorial authorities do not do this work as they tend to focus on waste and there is nobody else putting their hand up. The Ministry for Economic Development would like to see the programme expand nationally, but first

wants to gauge its success. It, therefore, makes sense for Greater Wellington to test the programme and, after a year, we can make a decision whether or not to continue to participate. There was a possibility that the programme could become self funding. Councillor Buchanan expressed some disquiet about Greater Wellington providing a subsidised consultancy service and the long-term implications of our reliance on the Ministry for Economic Development. Councillor Laidlaw considered that there needed to be consultation with other bodies with interests in this sector with a view to generating more traction for a single, clearly identifiable service for the region as a whole. We needed to find out whether the programme could be self-sustaining in the long-term. It was emphasised that the programme was currently running at no extra cost to the Council and would actually provide \$15k income. The idea in the long term would be to secure a significant corporate sponsor. There was support for raising the profile of the Enviromark brand, although the point was made that it was central government's job to promote the brand, with Greater Wellington's role being to get the businesses up to standard.

4. Unconfirmed minutes

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee meeting are attached as *Attachment 1*.

5. Recommendations

That the Council:

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

Report prepared by:

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Chair,
Regional Sustainability

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Attachment 1: Unconfirmed Minutes of the Committee