

3. 'E' CHANNEL OPPORTUNITIES

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Consultation and Communication Special Committee of projects that could increase civic engagement using the 'e' channel and to inform the Committee of resource implications.

BACKGROUND

During a presentation to the Consultation and Communication Special Committee on 3 October 2002, Councillors were informed of ways overseas Councils are using the 'e' channel to increase civic engagement.

A summary was also given of ways the Christchurch City Council is currently using the 'e' channel with success.

- Christchurch City Council Annual Plan
 - 2001 = 8% of submissions received electronically.
 - 2002 aim was 20%.
 - 2002 = 30% of submissions received electronically (out of 680).
 - (Dunedin City Council only received 15% of submission electronically this year).
- Lichfield / Tuam Swap Project
 - 32% of submissions received electronically (out of 700).
- Healthy Christchurch Project
 - 2001, only 8% of groups identified desire for electronic communication (out of 154).
 - TODAY, 80% prefer electronic communication (out of 180).

The statistics below indicate the growing use of the internet and email and current expectations by Christchurch residents as reflected in the Annual Residents Survey.

- Annual Residents Survey
 - 47% use www and email once a week or more.
 - Almost 70% rate the importance of the www as a source of information that helps them make decisions as either 'important' or 'very important'.
 - Almost 20% of total respondents have visited Christchurch City Council website.
 - Over 50% of respondents said they would like to receive an email newsletter.
- Census 2001, Statistics New Zealand
 - 39% of Christchurch households have access to the Internet.
 - 37% of households nationwide have access to the Internet.
 - 80% of businesses nationwide use the internet and email.
- Christchurch City Libraries
 - Over 200 computers access the internet for free.

Councillors requested some 'ball park' costs for completing some of the projects mentioned during the presentation. The remaining report describes the proposed new projects and the required resources.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

There are a number of projects that the Council could complete to increase civic engagement using the 'e' channel. The attached table outlines some of the potential projects.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Resource Implications

The aforementioned 'proposed new projects' require people resource to complete the projects. The skill sets required are all based around 'e' technology, communications and community consultation. The tables following outline the different options available and the skill set required. Also, the resources for each of the different options relate to those resources defined in Table 1.

Option 1:

Projects completed	Resource	\$ Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">E-newsletters/ bulletins, option 1 onlyPilot: Online Discussion Forum	1 person: skill set: e focus, communication, community consultation (\$50,000)	\$50,000

Option 2:

Projects completed	Resource	\$ Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">My CouncillorMy Community Board MemberE-newsletters/ bulletins, option 1 onlyHave Your Say WebsitePilot: Online Discussion ForumYouth Website	1 person: skill set: communications, e focus, community consultation (\$50,000) 1 person ecouncil Team (\$50,000)	\$100,000

Option 3:

Projects completed	Resource	\$ Cost
All	1 person, skill set: communications, e focus, community consultation (\$50,000) 1 person, skill set: communication, e focus (\$50,000) 1 person, skill set: e focus, communication (\$50,000)	\$150,000

Pilot Projects

Two pilot projects have been identified. The first 'e-newsletters' would be run for a period of one year after which time the success of the project would need to be evaluated. If the project was deemed to be a success or worthy of continuing, the project would require more funding to continue. Success could be measured by the number of subscribers.

The second pilot project is an online discussion forum. If the project was successful, further resources would be required.

Funding Options

The resources required and the associated staffing costs indicated in this report are based on the costs of directly employing people on a fixed term one year contract, not the costs of using a commercial web development company.

CONCLUSION

All of the aforementioned proposed projects could be used to enhance civic engagement. To make a significant impact we recommend at least option 2.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the Committee indicate its favoured option for the 2003/04 financial year.