

14. PUBLIC NOTICES

Officer responsible Council Secretary	Author Max Robertson, DDI 941-8533
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The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a variation of the Council's present policy requiring public notices to be placed in both The Star and The Press.

BACKGROUND

In February 2000 the Council resolved to split classified advertising between The Press and The Star, with The Press being used for advertisements involving employment, tenders, property and resource consent, and The Star being used for public notices and resource consent advertisements.

This decision was reached after a tendering process, and after considering the advantages and disadvantages of using each or both newspapers.

The Council was subsequently criticised for not placing public notices in The Press, partly because there are some rural areas on the edge of the city to which The Star is not delivered. As a result, the Council in July 2000 modified its earlier decision, and adopted a revised policy requiring public notices and City Plan/resource consent notices to be placed in both The Star and The Press, with employment, tender and property advertisements being placed in The Press only.

EFFECT OF COUNCIL POLICY ON ADVERTISEMENTS PLACED FOR OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Council receives approximately 50 applications per annum from voluntary and commercial organisations seeking approval for the temporary closure of roads for such events as the filming of advertisements, motor racing events, cycle races and neighbourhood street parties.

For many years, the staff involved with such closures have usually debited the cost of the associated advertisements to the organisation requesting the closure. Prior to adoption of the current advertising policy, such advertisements were usually placed in only one newspaper, in a single column format, resulting in a total advertising charge of approximately \$400. Now that such advertisements are required to be placed in both newspapers (usually with other Council notices in a double column format on either a Wednesday or Saturday) the cost has risen substantially, and we are experiencing resistance to the payment of the advertising costs in such cases. In one recent instance, the organisers of a marathon event were faced with an advertising bill of \$2,525 (this was a relatively complicated road closure notice). In the case of other (usually small) organisations the advertising charges have sometimes had to be written off.

COUNCIL POLICY REGARDING EVENTS ON LEGAL ROAD

At its meeting on 23 May 2002 the Council (on the recommendation of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee) adopted the following policies regarding events on legal road:

- (a) That all Traffic Management Plans for events on roads be prepared by a qualified Site Traffic Management Supervisor (STMS) from 1 July 2002.
- (b) That staff consider ways of reducing the cost involved in processing Traffic Management Plans with the view of implementing charges by 1 July 2003.
- (c) That independent audits be carried out on a random basis on events from 1 July 2003.
- (d) That, due to the problems faced by bus operators, Colombo Street and Cathedral Square between Moorhouse Avenue and Armagh Street be used for major events/parades only, with other events/parades being required to avoid this area.

In the course of the debate regarding this new policy, Councillor Stonhill referred to a recent article in LGNZ News, suggesting that councils could be proactive in encouraging filming and other events on legal road, by (for instance) meeting all the associated processing and other costs, rather than charging these to the applicant. The Council therefore decided not to adopt the Committee's recommendation that, as part of the new policy, companies and other persons running events for commercial gain (including large film companies) be required to meet all processing and advertising costs, equipment hire, road space rental and parking charges, and instead requested the City Streets Manager to report back to the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee on whether or not such charges should be waived. Although the City Streets Manager has yet to report back on this issue, contact has been made with the Wellington City Council, which advises that while it is the Council's general policy to pass on all the associated costs of road closures (including advertising) an exception was made for the opening premier for Lord of the Rings, where the costs (amounting to \$55,000) were met by the Council itself.

That report may result in a decision to waive charges, but in view of the high costs involved, it is likely that separate provision will need to be made in next year's Annual Plan should the Council subsequently decide to accept responsibility for these charges.

INTERIM PROPOSAL

In the meantime, adoption of an interim variation to the present policy regarding the insertion of public notices in both newspapers will ease the difficulties currently being experienced by organisations requesting temporary road closures, and obviate the need for such charges to be written off from time to time.

CONCLUSION

In the circumstances, I recommend that the Council agree to a variation of its present advertising policy, to allow such notices to be inserted in The Press only. This will achieve significant savings for the organisations concerned, while still providing adequate public notice of the road closures proposed.

Staff

Recommendation: That, pending consideration of the forthcoming report by the City Streets Manager, the Council adopt the following revised advertising policy:

- “(a) That public notices and City Plan/resource consent notices be placed in both The Star and The Press.*
- “(b) That employment, tender and property advertisements be placed in The Press only.*
- “(c) That, where advertisements giving public notice of intended road closures are placed at the request of outside voluntary and commercial organisations, such notices be placed in The Press only.”*

Chair's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.