

2004 NEW ZEALAND POST MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

CATEGORY: **TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION**

PROJECT: **HASTINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL – CDROM LONG TERM
COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN**

Executive Summary

The Challenge

To produce a ten-year plan that captures the interest of the public, is user friendly, utilises latest technologies and is delivered at an affordable cost.

The Solution

- ✓ The production of a glossy Overview document capturing the flavour of the plan and acting as an enticement to seek more specific information.
- ✓ Production of the bulk of the plan on CDROM with easy to use click and point menus, links and printing features.
- ✓ Adding a personal touch by way of a video introduction to the plan from the Mayor.



Competition Criteria

1. The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the Council's vision and strategic direction.

The Hastings District Council recognised that a more innovative approach would be required to produce a Long Term Council Community Plan that would engage the public. Like other local authorities the Hastings District Council has found it difficult to engage a sometimes apathetic and uninterested community in an often complicated and technical decision making process.

The requirements of the Local Government Act (2002) meant that a large document would need to be produced, when in reality it is estimated that 80% of the content would only be read by a small proportion of the community.

The challenge was therefore to produce a plan which would capture the public at large by making it readable, enticing people to seek more detail and to cater for those in the community requiring the full detail of the plan.

Building on the Council's Communication and IT strategies the decision was taken to produce a concise informative glossy overview document summarising key points in the plan with the detail produced in electronic form on CDROM.

The Council's IT strategy contains the following principles in regard to information access:

- Provision of access to information in a user-friendly environment.
- The facilitation of easy search and retrieval functionality.

The CDROM LTCCP delivered this with click & point ease of use, printing features and the advantages gained by using a more durable material as opposed to paper.

Council's strategic plan **Hastings Towards 2011** set out Council's vision "Hastings, the lifestyle of choice, a place of opportunities" with Council's mission "working with our people towards a proud and progressive community".

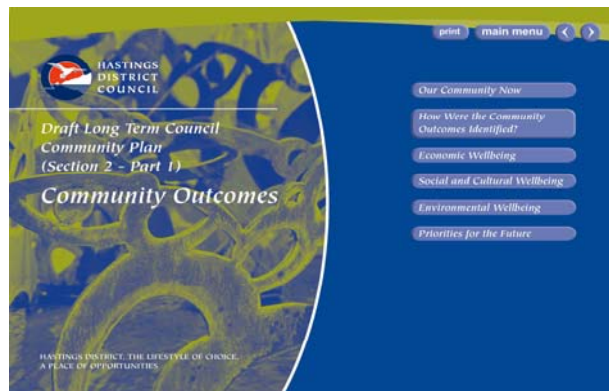


If Council was to work with its community in the way it stated then the plan needed to be presented in a way that engaged the public rather than switching them off due to information overload.

The CDROM LTCCP achieved this but also provided a further benefit in that the CD was distributed widely to staff, proving a useful resource for Council Officers which in turn reinforced the strategic direction embedded through the plan.

2. Effective project management techniques.

The project commenced with the need to gain management team support to find a new way to engage the public in the LTCCP consultation process. This led to a small team being assigned to develop a new concept in regard to the production and presentation of the plan.



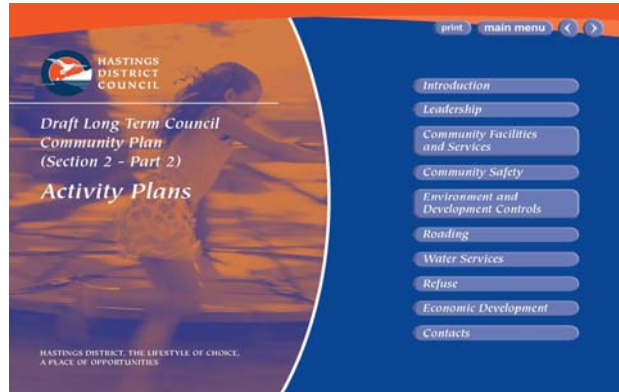
Once a structure had been agreed and the decision was taken to produce the LTCCP electronically, a number of specific teams were set up to deliver on the various elements contained with the Council's production strategy. Examples include:

- Activity Plan Managers
- Production Management Team (including Council staff and external agency)
- An external writer to ensure consistency of content

A project timeline was an important component to ensure that various important milestones were achieved until the eventual production and release of the CDROM.

3. A participatory approach to communicating with and getting “buy-in” from stakeholders associated with the project.

The primary purpose of the project was to improve community engagement and as such the primary stakeholders were the Hastings District Council community. In the first instance, however, it was necessary to gain buy-in from the secondary stakeholders, this being the Hastings District Council staff and external project members, for example the advertising agency and writer.



A participatory approach was achieved because:

- A variety of staff were involved in the initial strategy creating a number of champions in different groups within the organisation.
- Management allocated sufficient resources to enable the project to be developed through to the completed CDROM, this was distributed to staff also.
- The project encouraged and acknowledged creativity.
- A strong partnership was created between Council and the external advertising agency built around clear definition of project requirements, regular communication and interaction, and the sense of achievement brought about by trying something new.
- Audit New Zealand were involved early in the project to provide feedback and assurance on the approach being taken.

4. Innovation and originality in the specific award category area.

History shows that local bodies in general have been very good at producing large volumes of legislative compliance material, but have tended to place the readers requirements as a secondary consideration.

The CDROM has enabled a lot of information to be easily accessed via the click and point ease of use, the menu structure and sectional printing features.



The Mayoral video introduction is an innovation which assists in personalising the plan to its readers.

The production of the CDROM in its current form has positioned the Council to now take advantage of stage two developments which will include:

- Incorporating a search engine
- Including more interactive features using the Council “Puzza” mascot
- Including links to web pages

5. Successful results, in both financial and non-financial terms.

From a financial perspective the benefits were clear, burning a CD is considerably cheaper than printing a 400 plus page document.

Construction of electronic documents \$5,550
and production of CD's, sleeves and
CD label (full Colour).

Production of the plan as saddle stitched \$57,008
Paper documents.

The project also reaped the following non-financial benefits:

- ❑ Community engagement was achieved with a record 1285 submissions to the plan – traditional response approx 120 submissions.
- ❑ Positive feedback was received from residents.
- ❑ It has provided a useful resource for staff, being compact and able to be loaded on lap tops etc for attendance at meetings.
- ❑ Frequently asked questions on areas such as the communities profile are now easily answered from a central source.
- ❑ The cost advantages have meant that a wider distribution could occur, providing a resource for schools and Council staff.



6. That the project was a 'good, sensible and right thing to do'.

The underlying motivation for the project was to make the LTCCP a friendlier document and a more inclusive process for the Hastings District Community. Given the importance placed on community interaction and consultation in the Local Government Act (2002), on this basis alone the project was a 'good, sensible and right thing to do'

As outlined in the previous sections numerous benefits were attained by adopting an electronic mode of delivery for the LTCCP.

The Hastings District Council is now well placed to make further improvements in its quest to more effectively engage the public into the future. The Council's IT strategy is seen as a key ingredient to delivering on this outcome.

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