

Report: 03.84
Date: 27 February 2003
File: SP/01/02/01

Committee Policy, Finance and Strategy
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Corporate Advisory Services : Proposed Business Plan 2003-2013

1. Purpose

To seek approval of the proposed Business Plan for the Corporate Advisory Services division, including any amendments approved by the Committee.

2. Overview

The Corporate Advisory Services division includes the following departments:

- Employment Relations
- Communications
- Corporate Policy
- Corporate Policy Manager

Employment Relations provides the human resources, payroll and training functions for the Council and acts as the General Manager's advisors in these areas, noting that the General Manager is legally the Employer on behalf of the Council.

Communications encompasses the more traditional functions of looking after the Council's day-to-day communications requirements such as press releases, advising the divisions on their publications, and producing Coast to Coast and Elements. Increasingly, the aim has been to orient these functions towards more directly supporting the Council's overall aim of sustainability.

The Corporate Policy area looks after many aspects of longer-term planning (and associated policies) and also is the "home" for matters that arise that don't fit within the normal business of council. Much of my time as Corporate Policy Manager is associated with this area.

The proposed Business Plan for the division includes the following proposed Operating Plans:

- Employment Relations
- Communications
- Corporate Policy
- Corporate Policy Manager

These plans have been previously distributed to Councillors and will be tabled at the meeting on 4 March 2003.

3. Key Issues/Areas of Focus

3.1 Employment Relations

A new set of service standards has recently been adopted that puts a little more emphasis on consistency and central oversight against divisional flexibility. Such a balance is always a judgment call. The Employment Relations area will need to ensure that the new approach works well.

New legislation continues to be introduced in the employment area, most recently with regard to Health and Safety. The department will advise the General Manager on such legislation to achieve compliance and the good outcomes intended without unnecessary bureaucracy.

The Information System serving Payroll and Human Resources (as well as finance) requires a higher than normal level of technical support. That support has recently been transferred to the department. Having the support “in-house” will facilitate incremental improvement to the services provided.

3.2 Communications

The key issues for communications are seen to be, in the shorter-term, completing the roll-out of the branding, and in the longer-term ensuring that the communications function is directed towards supporting the Council’s drive towards a more sustainable region. To this end the Social Marketing Programme is seen as key.

3.3 Corporate Policy

The role of Corporate Policy has been somewhat redirected as a result of the passing of the Local Government Act 2002. The emphasis on community processes and collaboration means that the Council has to invest more time and resources to working with others and understanding better the requirements of the community. By contrast, procedural issues that used to apply to regional councils are no longer a concern.

4. Changes between 2002/03 and 2003/04

The changes in funding requirements relate to four main areas.

In Employment Relations an unbudgeted position to support the Information System has been redeployed from Finance.

In Communications an extra position was introduced 2001/2002 to support the move towards more strategic communications, but at the time no budget allocation was made.

The social marketing programme (and associated web development in I.T.) is an initiative to move, in the longer term, towards a more sustainable region. Such an approach is founded on the view that real change will occur through many small changes by many people over time.

The *deletion* of a specific budget for advocacy means that if issues arise externally that require significant expenditure, then such expenditure will need to be allocated on a case-by-case basis.

5. Financial implications across the ten years

The requirement to facilitate the community's identification of community outcomes every six years, and the recognition that the Information System will need regular upgrades, prevents a consistent expenditure in the out years.

6. Changes to the proposed business plan recommended by officers

Officers recommend the deletion of the \$50,000 provision for advocacy.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee recommend to Council that it:

- (1) receive the report and note its contents.*
- (2) note that the proposed business plan for the Corporate Advisory Services division includes proposed operating plans for the following departments:*
 - Employment Relations*
 - Communications*
 - Corporate Policy*
 - Corporate Policy Manager*
- (3) note that officers are recommending the deletion of \$50,000 for "advocacy" from the Corporate Policy budget.*

- (4) *approve the proposed business plan for the Corporate Advisory Services division (including any amendments approved by the Committee) for inclusion in the Council's proposed Long-term Council Community Plan 2003-2013 (incorporating the Council's 2003/04 Annual Plan).*

Report prepared by:

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