

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chair and Members, Communications Subcommittee

FROM: Communications Adviser

REFERENCE: C797

SUBJECT: **Communications Activity Report – RFN10-08-09**

Purpose

To inform the Communications subcommittee of the work and achievements of the Council's communications function.

Discussion

July marked the first month of Dry Crust's new contract with Tasman District Council, and this has been a catalyst for a number of communications planning and strategy projects to commence.

Communications Planning

Each Department within Council has been visited to work up a communications plan for each piece of activity that has been identified in the 2010/2011 Annual Plan. This work is 80% complete. Once all department managers have been met with, and a calendar drawn up around their key activities, we will overlay the plans to create a Council wide communications calendar. The main benefit of this work will be:

- to provide visibility of all Council activity that requires communications support (enabling us to proactively ensure comprehensive communications support is provided to each project)
- ensure that any conflicting projects/messages aren't communicated at the same time
- ensure that similar or supporting projects are communicated in a holistic manner ensuring that residents get to understand the bigger picture (rather than following each project as its own individual story).

Website

Following a soft launch within Council to identify omissions and mistakes the new Tasman District Council website was made available online on 11 August. The website is a work in progress and will be continuously updated, reviewed and enhanced. The key elements of the new website are the internal control of its information and structure and its accessibility, usability and performance.

Work Order Process

A new Work Order Form process has been created and each new job being briefed in to Dry Crust must be supported by a completed form. The form gives details of the project and work required (job description, audience, desired outcome, additional communications support required). It also provides a 'cost code' or purchase order number. This is proving very beneficial to Council staff - it acts as a pause button, makes the staff member think

about what they are trying to achieve, why and by when and also ensures that budget is allocated to pay for the work. It also provides the opportunity to discuss strategic communications options to assist the objectives of the project.

Media Monitoring

As part of the new communications contract Council's media activity is being monitored to obtain a measure of the positive and negative perceptions driven by the media. Having always been clipped and scanned in the past Council's media coverage 1 July 2010 has been monitored in relation to the value of coverage both in terms of \$ and perception. The July 2010 report is attached.

NewsLine

July has seen two 12 page issues of Newsline produced with feedback continuing to be positive in terms of the process, the end product (from a Council perspective) and from readers point of view. A continual improvement policy is now in force with regard to Newsline, reviewing each issue and seeing what improvements can be made. New additions include extending the 'Updates' section to two pages to accommodate all public notices in full, and an 'Events Guide', with content supplied by *It's On*. Advertising space is experiencing higher demand than ever before with many advertisers now signed up on rolling 12 week contracts. Advertising is now at 100% of the allocated space.

In addition to the ongoing publication a review of Newsline has been initiated. This will be a first principle investigation reviewing the purpose, delivery, format, cost, content, timeliness and processes involved. The draft outline of the review is attached as a separate paper on this agenda for discussion and debate. The review will involve community associations, residents and ratepayers to ensure the newspaper is continuing to achieve its initial aim in being set up and whether this initial aim is still in fact valid.

Jam

Two focus group sessions regarding JAM magazine and have been held, working with local youth to identify what they want from the publication going forward. Interesting facts identified thus far, of the youth we have spoken to, 100% have broadband access at home or at school, 80% don't read hard copy publications in their spare time, but instead access information via the web, and 100% have Facebook accounts. Dry Crust is working with Paul McConachie to see how best JAM could be taken from a print publication to an online version incorporating ways for youth to contribute directly through comments, conversations, images, video, etc., whilst still retaining the Youth Council's role as key content directors.

Forms

A recent major project, driven by the new website, has been a review of the forms currently used in conducting the Council's operations. There is now a consistent numbering system, they are stored in one place and have review dates. As well as having a consistent look and feel there is a greater management capability of the resource which can be exercised online or in hardcopy.

Radio Advertising

Ongoing work with the Media Works stable of radio stations has been focused on the strategic use of the recognition the Council currently enjoys through its radio advertising.

The strategic use of radio will manifest itself in less but longer advertisements providing the opportunity to promote a call to action with greater levels of knowledge.

Policy initiation and renewal

The new contractual regime has also provided the Council with the opportunity to review a number of relevant policies. The first policies, advertising and media, have been provided as drafts to the Subcommittee for its discussion and debate (refer to separate paper on the agenda).

Media Report

Attached as Appendix 1.

Current Work

The attached sheet (Appendix 2) outlines the work in progress at Dry Crust as at 11 August 2010.

Recommendation

That the Committee accept the report.

Chris Choat
Communications Adviser