

Residents' Groups

In 1991 Council established the following policy to encourage communities to group together and look constructively at the needs and aspirations of their residents. The Shirley Advocacy Team will assist in the formation of any new groups, as well as facilitate the efficient running of existing groups.

Formation and Recognition

That the Christchurch City Council encourages the formation of local residents' groups.

1. That local residents' groups be able to apply to their Community Board for recognition as the "official" residents' group for the area.
2. That residents' group boundaries within each community be determined by the relevant Community Board.
3. That such groups, upon recognition, receive the right to be consulted by the Council on all work planned within their boundaries.
4. That the Council provide free typing and photocopying for official residents' groups, within limits approved by the Community Advocate.

Service Centre Support

Photocopying/Typing Service

Recognised Residents' Associations are welcome to take advantage of the typing and copying service available through the Shirley Service Centre. However, to ensure rational and fair allocation of the service the following criteria will apply:

1. 600 single-sided or 400 double-sided A4 sized copies per month will be available at no cost to each association. Copies in excess of this number will be charged at 4 cents per single-sided copy and 5 cents per double-sided copy.
2. Monthly allocations may be carried forward up to a maximum period of 12 months.
3. Council work must take priority. Therefore, please allow three days for typing and photocopying.
4. Copy that requires typing must be legible. The Council accepts no responsibility for errors or misprints in photocopied text.
5. No charge will be made for the time taken by Service Centre staff to type or run off copies.

Getting Underway

Boundaries

By their nature, residents' groups represent people who live in a particular neighbourhood of interest and have concerns in common. Identifying suitable boundaries is one of the first steps when applying for Council recognition. Boundaries of neighbourhoods may be naturally

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occurring, for example the loop of a river, or the result of a planning decision such as a motorway. Some are focused on or around shopping centres, while others exist because of zoning regulations, for example where individual zones exist beside residential zones.

Residents' groups function best when there is a common interest or sense of identity. However, before deciding on your boundaries check with the Shirley Service Centre Advocacy Team to find what other residents' groups are adjacent to your neighbourhood in case boundaries overlap.

Steering Committees

It is a good idea to begin with a small steering committee of people who can organise publicity and support for your first public meeting. To find members of the steering committee, you could approach your neighbours, friends or local shopkeepers (should they be residents). It would be helpful at this stage to contact the Shirley Service Centre. The Community Development Adviser is available to provide advice and support.

The First Step

Many groups have found that a public meeting is the best way of getting the community involved. However, attracting people away from their homes to a meeting is not always easy. It involves selecting issues that the community sees as important and organising an effective publicity campaign.

When publicising the meeting select a theme or issue that is important to the residents you wish to attract. Issues will vary from area to area. Some residents will be concerned about protecting or enhancing the character of their neighbourhood. In other areas, the issue may involve concern over a proposed motorway, or the future of the trees on the banks of the Avon. Having selected an issue, or perhaps having invited a popular speaker, it is important to publicise the meeting as widely as possible.

Here is a useful checklist:

- Talk to as many residents as possible about the meeting.
- Publish a leaflet with date, place, time and purpose of the meeting and distribute through people's letterboxes.
- Place notices in local shop windows, church noticeboards, medical and community centres.
- Ask the local newspaper to publish a small article about your meeting.
- Invite your City Councillors and Community Board members.
- Request local radio stations to publicise it in their community diaries.
- Officially invite and inform other local organisations, eg service clubs, churches.

To help and encourage participation, the Shirley Service Centre may be able to assist with seeding or promotional costs. Discuss this with the Community Development Adviser.

The Public Meeting

The success of your public meeting will depend on a number of factors.

1. Ensure that the venue is accessible to all, especially the elderly and people with disabilities for whom access is important.
2. The venue should be warm and welcoming. It is important that you develop an informal and appreciative atmosphere. Some groups begin their meetings with tea or coffee to give those attending a chance to meet each other. Name tags are very useful. Seeding funds are also available to assist the establishment of new groups.

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3. The meeting must be well chaired to keep to its primary focus. Many people lose interest or become disillusioned if the meeting fails to achieve its objective or becomes distracted with other business. Do not allow any individual to dominate proceedings, encourage all participants to have a say. Invite a notable and respected person from your community to chair the meeting. Make sure they are well briefed on its objective.

Frequency of Meetings

The residents' committee should meet regularly and at an agreed time and venue. Once a year a general meeting should be held to elect officers and present an annual report.

Keeping Your Residents' Group Alive

During the first few months of your committee's existence, the enthusiasm of belonging to something new will result in a good response from people in your neighbourhood. Over a period of time, however, this enthusiasm could fade. The committee will need to make a special effort to ensure that residents are aware of what is happening and to stay in touch with their concerns and priorities. Some residents' groups publish a regular newsletter, others organise local events, socials, fairs and learning opportunities. Many residents' groups have become actively involved in promoting neighbourhood support groups.

Try to make your meetings interesting. By ensuring that meetings are well managed, held in comfortable surroundings and always have an achievable objective, you are more likely to keep the enthusiasm of your members alive. Involve all members and do not allow one person to dominate or monopolise the group's tasks. Ensure duties and tasks are shared amongst the committee.

Spend as little time as possible discussing details, and encourage discussion and contributions from everyone in the area. Specific projects such as tree planting or social activities will help to foster a sense of achievement and community. Concentrating your activities will help to foster a sense of achievement and community. Concentrating your efforts on a number of small problems may be a wiser course of action than larger, more frustrating and time-consuming projects.

Tackle the big issues by all means, but be sure that a number of smaller, more achievable projects keep your committee alive. If you feel your committee is getting bogged down in the same old things, have another look at the original aims and objectives in your constitution, and ask yourselves if you are really achieving those things you set out to do.

People need to enjoy the things they are involved in, so try to keep a sense of fun about all that you do. Membership of a well-run residents' group can be a very rewarding experience.

The Burwood/Pegasus Community Board, in supporting the policy, actively promote:

1. Consultation on Projects (roading, parks, traffic, Neighbourhood Improvement Plans and Local Area Traffic Management Schemes).
2. Regular residents' association meetings with an open forum.
3. Provision of a special time set aside (6.00pm) at each ordinary Board meeting to address the Board on matters of concern (prior notice of the topics to be discussed is required).
4. Consultation in regard to the allocation of the Board's Project Funds and the Council's Annual Plan and Budget.
5. Close liaison between the Board and associations by Board members attending association meetings.