

## 7. RESEARCH ON HEALTH OF SPORTS CLUBS IN CHRISTCHURCH

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the results of recent research carried out on the health of sports clubs in Christchurch.

### INTRODUCTION

Sport Canterbury has recently carried out research to investigate the health of sports clubs in Christchurch on behalf of the Council. There has been significant anecdotal information that sports clubs are 'struggling', having difficulty recruiting volunteers etc. This research was commissioned to achieve the following:

- To establish how 'healthy' sports clubs are in Christchurch. What proportion are struggling and thriving.
- To identify the key issues the clubs identified as impacting their ability to operate effectively.
- To provide a benchmark on the health of sports clubs in Christchurch from which to monitor future changes.

### METHODOLOGY

In order to develop a suitable survey Sport Canterbury carried out a "brainstorm" amongst its own staff to identify the important areas to seek information on. Two focus groups were also held with key people in the sports community to further identify and refine the areas to seek information on.

The survey was developed and applied to a range of summer and winter sports clubs. The sample was selected to cover a wide range of sports and situations. The sports selected for the survey were cricket, bowls, rowing, tennis and softball in the summer and netball, gymnastics, rugby, rugby league, badminton, table tennis, hockey, soccer and basketball in the winter.

The surveys were distributed on a self return basis to sports clubs with returns primarily from administrators and club players. In addition some questionnaires were completed by interviews in person as part of the follow up.

Overall 400 responses were achieved with 200 from the summer clubs and 200 from the winter clubs.

### KEY FINDINGS

Most clubs, 71%, reported having a shortage of volunteers and the research identified a definite trend towards volunteers involved with clubs being over 40 years of age, especially in the administrator role. Participants, however, were found to be in younger age categories with participation dropping off in the 30 to 40 age group.

It would also appear that clubs offering rewards and recognition to attract volunteers are more likely to attract them than if nothing was offered.

Strategic planning was non existent in about 72% of clubs. There are 10% less summer clubs with such plans compared to winter clubs and this could be a reason for the membership decline reported by 70% of summer clubs. Winter sports clubs reported their membership as increasing.

Most respondents, 82%, surveyed believed that their club had a key person. Succession planning in clubs occurred in only 43% of the respondent's clubs.

Almost half of the respondent's clubs that owned facilities are not using them to their full potential. However, 62% indicated that the facilities were shared with other organisations. Most (88%) of those surveyed said their facilities were assets rather than liabilities.

Fifty-four per cent of respondents indicated that their clubs recruit from schools using a variety of means from newsletters to providing coaching.

Overall 80% of respondents felt that their subscription was competitive and 80% felt it was value for money. Respondents were asked about their club's profit and loss accounts over the last five years with 42% indicating their clubs ran at a loss over that period. One can only surmise that reserves, overdrafts or assets sales are keeping them afloat where there are significant deficits.

Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that their clubs communicated with their members throughout the year and not just in the playing season. The most frequently used method to communicate with club members was a combination of newsletters and meetings.

Seventy-nine per cent of respondents indicated that their clubs did seek feedback from its members with meetings being the most popular (57%) method of gathering this feedback. It was noted that attendance at meetings however was not good and that more representative methods needed to be developed.

The principal reason for respondents joining a club was found to be because family members and friends were members. Methods such as websites, flyers and advertisements had little effect. This highlights the need of clubs to use their existing members as a basis for recruiting further members.

## **RESPONSES TO THE FINDINGS**

It is important that the findings of this research is made available to regional sports organisations and sport clubs. Sport Canterbury is currently identifying the best means to communicate the information.

Sport Canterbury provides advice and assistance to sports clubs and regional sports organisations in a number of the areas identified in the survey with the Council providing some funding to assist this type of work. Council staff are also involved in a number of cases where the sports club makes use of Council parks or facilities.

The information largely quantifies and confirms the picture already formed of the situation facing sports clubs in the work on the Draft Recreation and Sport Strategy. The Draft Strategy identified a number of strategies for improving the situation faced by sports clubs. During the consultation of the Draft Strategy the ideas for assisting sports clubs were widely canvassed and feedback received on them. The Recreation and Sport Strategy Steering Group has reviewed the feedback with a view to improving the strategy further. The Recreation and Sport Strategy will be completed in the next few months.

One of the initiatives identified in the Draft Strategy was the development of a sports club quality mark. Work has commenced on developing this tool with Council staff working with Sport Canterbury, Crown Public Health and ACC to bring a partnership approach to the work. The quality mark is to be piloted in the next couple of months.

### **Staff**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received.

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received, and that Council staff continue to work with Sport Canterbury on the needs of sports clubs.