

16. BOARD PROCESSES AND 2003 MEETINGS SCHEDULE

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The purpose of this report is to review the revised meeting processes used by the Board in 2002 and consider enhancements to the processes for 2003. A schedule of Board meetings and seminars for 2003 is also to be proposed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From March 2002 the Board changed its meeting structure from one ordinary Board meeting per monthly cycle to two meetings. This structure was to be reviewed after six months, with any changes to be implemented for 2003.

This report provides an analysis of the Board's workload in terms of the meeting structure over the past two years, summarises feedback from officers on the operation of the structure, provides a comparison with the structures of other community boards, and identifies some operational issues for consideration.

A draft version of this report was considered by a Board Working Party on 5 November 2002. The Working Party is recommending that the Board continue to hold two ordinary meetings each monthly cycle with the existing split in business. Some administrative changes are also suggested. A proposed schedule of meetings and seminars for 2003 is intended to be tabled at the meeting.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 28 January 2002, the Board decided to change from one to two ordinary meetings in each monthly cycle of meetings prior to the Council standing committee meetings and the full Council meeting. The Board had reviewed its processes in light of the increasing length of Board meetings, a major expansion of the Board's delegations and a desire to engage more effectively with the community.

The option of two ordinary Board meetings was preferred to the possible introduction of a Board standing committee structure of two or four committees. The practice of holding additional special meetings and seminars, and of convening subcommittees and working parties for specific purposes was to continue.

Reports to the Board have been split between the two meetings with Property, Projects and City Streets items referred to the first meeting and Community Development, Leisure, Parks and Waterways and Environment items referred to the second meeting. The Chairperson and the Community Advocate have the discretion to schedule reports other than on this basis, providing flexibility for reasons of urgency or for balancing workloads between the meetings.

The change to two ordinary meetings was intended to provide for:

- More manageable and shorter meetings.
- An ability to handle an increasing workload assuming increased delegations would result in more matters being referred and more final decisions resting with the Board.
- More opportunities for the community to have input at Board meetings.
- A division of subject-matter between the meetings so that Business Unit staff would generally only be required to attend one of the monthly meetings.

The Board agreed to review the structure of two ordinary monthly meetings after it had been in operation for six months and implement any subsequent changes for 2003.

ANALYSIS OF BOARD MEETING WORKLOAD

An analysis was prepared of the Board's workload in 2001, by subject areas, to assist the Board to determine its meeting structure. Table 1 (see attachment) has been updated to include figures for 2002 (to the end of October). Note that the figures for 2001 cover nine monthly meeting cycles while the 2002 figures cover ten cycles (including eight cycles of two ordinary meetings per cycle).

Table 2 (see attachment) provides an analysis of the duration of meetings and of the number of items considered at ordinary Board meetings in 2001 and 2002.

A number of findings are evident from this data:

- There does not appear to have been a significant increase in the number of reports referred to the Board, although it is likely that in more cases the Board has been responsible for the final decision.
- The number of reports in each subject-area is fairly consistent.
- The number of subcommittees, working parties and site visits has dropped.
- A significant number of items are considered at the monthly Board seminars.
- More deputations have been heard in 2002.
- The length of meetings has generally reduced significantly following the change to two meetings.
- The overall time used each month has generally increased.
- The split in subject-matter between the two meetings has been even in the number of items but the second meeting has generally been significantly longer.

FEEDBACK FROM OFFICERS

Regular report writers from various Business Units were invited to provide feedback on their experience of the two meeting system. Their comments suggest:

- The system is generally working well.
- The Board has had more time to discuss items at each meeting, although this may lead to an unnecessarily long time being spent on an item.
- More regular meetings are helpful for dealing with urgent items.
- The split in subject-matter has worked well, with attendance generally only being required at one of the meetings. There can be some confusion over which meeting to report to, particularly when items are brought forward to fill up an agenda.
- Dealing with items once is an advantage over a Board standing committee system where matters tend to be considered twice.
- A single closing date for both agendas is difficult because of the significant delay until the second meeting.

The inclusion of indicative start times for agenda items was also mentioned as a valuable recent improvement to the management of meetings, reducing the waiting times for staff from Civic Offices.

For the Community Secretary and the Secretarial Services Officer, the change has spread the workload of preparing agendas and reports of meetings and following-up the Board's decisions. Generally this has been beneficial although the workload has been consistently high when scheduling issues resulted in three meetings in a calendar month or the second meeting fell very close to the closing date for the next month's agendas. It is hoped that the 2003 schedule can avoid these situations.

Members of the Advocacy Team, other than the Community Advocate and the Community Secretary, have not generally been required to attend both monthly meetings.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BOARDS' STRUCTURES

Structures of Each Board

A detailed explanation of the structures of the five other community boards was provided when the Board was considering a possible standing committee structure late in 2001. A summary is provided below.

Comparison of Community Board Meeting Structures

Board	Structures
Fendalton/Waimairi	One ordinary monthly Board meeting and three standing committees of four or five members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services Committee. • Finance and Planning Committee. • Works, Traffic and Environment Committee.
Hagley/Ferrymead	One ordinary monthly Board meeting and two standing committees of four to eight members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community, Policy and Finance Committee. • Environment, Works and Traffic Committee.

Board	Structures
Riccarton/Wigram	One ordinary monthly Board meeting and four standing committees of five members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services Committee. • Environment Committee. • Finance and Policy Committee. • Transport and Roding Committee.
Shirley/Papanui	One ordinary monthly Board meeting, some ongoing committees (for example, an Events Committee) and other ad hoc arrangements as required.
Spreydon/Heathcote	One ordinary monthly Board meeting and two standing committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Committee (all members; recent reconstitution of Community Services and Development Committee, Parks, Environment and Leisure Committee, and Transport Committee). • Finance and Policy Committee (five members).

The regularity of standing committee meetings varies between the community boards with some committees meeting only on an 'as required' basis. There is also variation in whether seminars and site visits fit are accommodated within the standing committee meetings or are held separately. Some with standing committees also have occasional ad hoc committees for specific matters.

Comparative Statistics on Meetings

Attached is a summary of comparative statistics on meetings of Community Boards and their committees. The summary is for the period from November 2001 to June 2002.

Comparative Costs

The comparative remuneration costs of the community boards for the period from 1 November 2001 to 30 October 2002 (excluding Councillor's fees, estimated at \$15,000 in total per annum) are:

Burwood/Pegasus	\$114,979
Fendalton/Waimairi	\$112,589
Hagley/Ferrymead	\$116,604
Spreydon/Heathcote	\$90,776
Shirley/Papanui	\$115,099
Riccarton/Wigram	\$94,875
Total	\$644,922

It is noted that such a comparison of costs may not give an accurate picture of the costs of different structures because controversial issues before a particular Board may have resulted in more meetings than is usual.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Balance of Workload Between Two Meetings

As previously noted, the split in subject-matters between the two meetings has resulted in longer second meetings for the consideration of Community Development, Leisure and Parks and Waterways reports. However, the current split has been effective in that Unit staff have generally only attended one meeting per month. There also appears to have been useful crossover in items within the existing subject-matter groupings.

The Board may wish to consider a different split in subject-matter or a minor adjustment (for example, transferring Leisure items to the first meeting). Alternatively a further balancing of workload may be achievable within the Chairperson and the Community Advocate's discretion to schedule items between the two meetings. This is already given consideration as part of the Chairperson's agenda meetings. Any reports outside of the described subject-areas could also be scheduled for the first meeting.

Preparation of Agendas

This year a single deadline was set each month for submitting reports for both agendas in the interests of administrative simplicity and with the aim of enabling a single Chairperson's agenda meeting to be held monthly.

The deadline falls ahead of the first monthly meeting, significantly earlier than the deadline for other community boards. As a result some reports of general interest to community boards may not be available by the deadline for this Board.

In practice, a single agenda deadline has been a problem. It requires officers to prepare reports two to three weeks ahead of the second meeting. The closing date may also be very soon after the second meeting, not allowing sufficient time for preparing reports when the request arises at that meeting.

The informal practice has developed of allowing some slippage from the deadline for reports to the second meeting. Where a number of reports are received in advance for the second meeting, a draft version of the second agenda has been circulated to give members more time to consider the reports. This has required staff to seek further input from the Chairperson where reports have been received after the monthly Chairperson's agenda meeting, and for a second agenda meeting to be held on occasion.

A continuation of the practice of effectively operating two agenda deadlines appears to be necessary. Formally setting two monthly agenda deadlines would make this practice more transparent and easier to manage. However, all the reports for the second meeting would then be likely to be received close to or on the due date, removing the possibility of an earlier draft agenda and necessitating two Chairperson's agenda meetings each month.

Financial Implications

The change to two ordinary monthly meetings was estimated to require a small increase in the overall budget for salaries and meeting fees for Board members. A slight reduction in the number of special meetings, seminars and ad hoc subcommittees and working parties was assumed. The budget provides for 22 ordinary meetings, two special meetings and nine seminars, and 11 subcommittee or other paid meetings (for each member).

The budget outturn for the 2001/02 financial year for these matters was within the allocation. In the current financial year expenditure is also tracking within the allocated budget.

Continuing with two ordinary monthly meetings does require continued prudence in convening other paid meetings. Staff are also mindful of containing associated costs such as catering.

Board Seminars

The Board has held seminars monthly, except in February and August when special meetings were required. The seminar format provides a valuable opportunity to receive briefings or hear from the community in a less formal and private setting.

Assuming that the Board wishes to continue to schedule regular seminars, the Board may wish to consider how the seminar time is used in 2003. For example, more community groups receiving significant funding from the Board could be invited to report to the Board on their work.

The Board may also wish to consider increased use of joint seminars with other community boards where this is an appropriate way to share briefings or there are issues of mutual interest.

WORKING PARTY'S VIEWS

The Working Party (Alister James, Don Rowlands and Chrissie Williams) supported the continued practice of two ordinary meetings per monthly cycle and regular seminars.

Expectations on the length of Board meetings were discussed. The average time of meetings in 2002 of two hours and 34 minutes was noted. It was seen as desirable to maintain a duration of between two to three hours to cope with the workload and to ensure that members could focus on effective decision-making. This was considered to be achievable provided there was effective management of the Board's time and discipline from individual speakers on items.

The Working Party saw a need, as a result of the split in subject-matter between meetings, to increase the awareness of Council staff and of the community of the nature of business to be dealt with at each Board meeting. Staff will look at options for enhancing the clarity of the split in subject-matter in Council meeting timetables and Board meeting publicity.

The current split in subject-matter was supported. The Working Party considered that the trend for the second meeting to be of longer duration could be addressed by the exercise of the Chairperson and the Community Advocate's discretion to schedule items between the two meetings. In particular, reports outside of the described subject-areas are to be scheduled for the first meeting.

The Working Party accepted that setting two separate deadlines for submitting reports to the two ordinary meetings would assist with the administration of the agendas, although this would require two Chairperson's agenda meetings and remove the possibility of circulating a draft version of the second agenda.

While a draft second agenda would not be possible, the Working Party saw value in early notification of upcoming reports. This could be done formally by the inclusion of a section in each Community Advocate's Update listing the reports expected for the following meeting.

The Working Party supported the continued use of seminars for briefings and for connecting with community groups. Greater use of seminar time may be allocated to regular updates from community groups receiving significant funding from the Board, residents' associations and community centres.

ORDINARY MEETING AND SEMINAR TIMETABLE FOR 2003

If possible, a draft timetable of Board meetings and seminars will be prepared for consideration at the Board meeting. The Strategy and Finance Committee is currently considering Council committee structures and meeting schedules, including the possibility of changing to a six weekly meeting cycle for Council standing committees and the full Council meeting. This may also impact on the scheduling of Board meetings for 2003.

If it remains uncertain how meetings are to be scheduled, the Board may wish only to schedule an initial meeting in 2003. Monday 27 January 2003 is proposed for the initial meeting.

CONCLUSION

Experience with the change to two ordinary monthly meetings suggests that the intended aims have largely been achieved. The meetings have been more manageable and shorter while allowing for an increased workload overall. All members have the opportunity to participate fully in Board decision-making through the ordinary meetings, a key advantage over a standing committee structure where the major consideration of an item may only involve a small number of members. The division of subject-matter between the two meetings has been effective, although some further balancing of workload may be desirable.

- Recommendations:**
1. That the Board continue to hold two ordinary meetings each monthly cycle and to divide the agendas between Property, Projects and Streets items and Community Development, Leisure, Parks and Waterways and Environment items, subject to the discretion of the Chairperson and the Community Advocate.
 2. That the proposed schedule of ordinary meetings, special meetings and seminars be adopted with all meetings to commence at 4.00 pm.
 3. That the Board continue to maintain a reasonable limit on the convening of additional subcommittees and working parties.
 4. That two separate deadlines for submitting reports to the two ordinary meetings be set.
 5. That the Community Advocate's Update in each agenda include advance notice of reports expected for the following meeting.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.