

12. ACHESON AVENUE SHOPS AND SURROUNDS

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee the direction the officer team is taking on the issue of the Acheson Avenue shops and MacFarlane Park; to clarify the scope of work and identify further resources that may be required in the near future and signal a need to make provision for them in the Long Term Council Community Plan process.

BACKGROUND

The Acheson Avenue shops, MacFarlane Park and immediate surrounds have been the topic of ongoing discussions for some time between both public and private organisations and stakeholders. The basis from which the project was initiated were Annual Plan submissions from a number of concerned stakeholder groups outlining various social and physical issues within the Acheson Avenue and greater Shirley area. Some of these issues had already been highlighted through two needs analyses, community meetings and by Council interests. An officer team has been established and now has a general understanding of the depth and breadth of issues in the area.

The wider social issues associated with the area are briefly discussed below. These need to be effectively worked on if improvements to the Acheson shops and MacFarlane Park and any work undertaken by other stakeholders, such as Housing New Zealand, are to be of lasting real benefit. Action to address most of the social issues is being taken in a variety of ways by a range of community and neighbourhood groups and social agencies. Many of these groups receive Council support and others may need support from time to time. It is important that both the Council and the Shirley/Papanui Community Board recognise this and are prepared to assist.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

A brief summary of some of the social issues experienced in the wider Shirley area are listed below.

- Gangs
- Intimidation
- Visual environmental deprivation
- Lack of youth activities/facilities
- Transport
- Health
- Unemployment
- Family stress
- Personal safety
- Access to leisure/recreation activities
- Multiple hardship - many families affected by numerous issues

A better understanding of organisations working in the Shirley area and community interests they service is outlined in the attachment. The matrix identifies the range of social issues in the Shirley area and the variety of community groups, organisations and agencies that are responding in a variety of ways to them. The ideal situation and intention of Council officers is to encourage agencies to work together, sharing resources and strengths, as it is difficult to solve individual issues in isolation.

The officer team identified the need for further work, which will be undertaken early next year, to assess the resources, potential effectiveness and longevity of social groups and agencies working in the area. This is in part a means of identifying whether there is potential to weave together local agencies and services through the better provision of physical facilities in the form of the shops or alternative building(s) within the Acheson Ave vicinity. Past research has identified the provision of facilities as a priority for the following activities, a Youth Centre, Kohanga reo and Marae-style community centre.

As part of this approach the officer team concluded that the focus of the new action by the Council needed to be on the Acheson Avenue shops and MacFarlane Park. If the Council does not lead action to address these matters then it is likely the unsatisfactory status quo will remain.

The staff recommendation is contained in the public excluded section of this agenda.