

8. PROSTITUTION REFORM ACT: THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

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The purpose of this report is to update the Regulatory and Consents Committee on the progress to date made by the Prostitution Reform Act Subcommittee.

BACKGROUND

On 24 July 2003 the Council approved the following timetable in relation to giving initial consideration to deciding what, if any, regulatory controls the Council wishes to further explore given the passing of the Prostitution Reform Act and the new powers and responsibilities the Council acquires under this Act.

August 2003	The Subcommittee identifies stakeholders and meets with them to hear their views on the operation of the prostitution industry and the issues that it is within the Council's power to address.
Mid August	The Subcommittee considers this stakeholder information and information from other sources and frames up the key issues and questions that will form a part of the public consultation programme.
Late August	A seminar for all Councillors and interested Community Board members explains the status quo and the proposed questions to be put to the public.
September	The consultation questionnaire is designed, the web site developed, and the associate communication plan put in place.
Early October	The Subcommittee signs off the questionnaire and associated consultation information and communication plan.
Mid October to Mid November	(provisional dates are 13 October to 13 November) the issue is open for public submission.
1 and 2 December	The Subcommittee hears those people who have asked to make oral submissions and considers them alongside the written and electronic responses.
9 December	The Subcommittee confirms its report and recommendations to Council.
19 December	Special Council meeting to receive the report and to decide what if any regulatory controls the Council wishes to further explore.

Any further action that the Council may decide to take as a result of the above process (either new bylaws or amendments to existing bylaws or variations to the City Plan) would occur in early 2004 and would be subject to further public consultation once specific measures were proposed.

THE PROCESS TO DATE

The Subcommittee is running to schedule, and at its last meeting approved a public consultation document and questionnaire. This will be the subject of a public consultation programme that will start with the publication of City Scene on 9 October and run through to 13 November. This programme will include display advertisements in the Press and the Christchurch Star, smaller adds in the classified sections of these papers and the making available of the questionnaire through the Council's web site, the Prostitutes Collective, and Massage Parlours. Hearing of those who request to make oral presentations will occur on 1 and 2 December.

The Act focuses on harm minimisation and the safeguarding of the welfare and occupational health of the sex workers. Much of the management of the industry falls on the Health Boards (for health and safety matters) and the Police (for crimes related to exploitation and engagement of under age prostitutes. The powers given to local authorities relate to the control of signage and the location of brothels. The consultation document therefore focuses on these areas.

Recommendation

from the Chair: That the information be received.