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Corporate Plan Output: Community Work and Training	

The purpose of this report is to respond to the concerns raised by deputations to the February meeting of the Committee about a number of aspects of the Community Wage Scheme.

BACKGROUND

The Community Relations Manager reported to the February meeting of the Committee on the implementation of the Government's Community Wage strategy.

The report advised that, to date, the major involvement by the Council in this new employment strategy has been in accepting Community Work and Training (CW&T) referrals from the Employment Services Team within the Canterbury Development Corporation. Employment Services, and the Canterbury Development Corporation, entered into a contract with Work and Income New Zealand to provide 180 placements on CW&T in the 15 month period ending on 30 June 1999. Employment Services has created a community work and training programme that offers the following benefits:

- A wide variety of work opportunities that do not require participants to become part of "make work" schemes, but rather allow them to experience work environments relevant to their future aspirations.
- A comprehensive menu of training opportunities that allows the participants to choose options relevant to their current roles and their intended career paths.
- Regular and unfettered access to Council officers, who are able to offer effective advice and support when needed.
- A system of monitoring that is supportive rather than regulatory. This enables personal and family issues to be effectively addressed, while also allowing for positive role modeling, motivation and increased skill levels.
- The selective waiving of sanctions.
- A programme where the emphasis is firmly on voluntary participation and achievement, where nobody is forced to participate or to work on projects to which they are unsuited.

The report concluded that the results strongly support the scheme run by Employment Services. There have been 124 positions listed with 90 of these being filled to date. Of the 51 people who have completed or left the

scheme 78.5% achieved the criteria for a positive outcome and of this group, 80% have moved into full time paid employment.

Employment Services believe that the scheme has materially assisted individual participants enhance their skills and improve their job prospects while providing the Council and community organisations with the opportunity to complete many worthwhile projects.

ISSUES RAISED BY DEPUTATIONS

Mrs Katherine Peet and Ms Ann Fass addressed the Committee on behalf of the Council of Social Services and the Canterbury Volunteer Centre respectively and raised concerns about a number of aspects of the Community Wage scheme, including the legal status of community wage recipients, job displacement, limitations of employment, sanctions and the effect on community work and volunteering. Concerns were also expressed about the exemption CDC had negotiated with WINZ from the sanctions requirement of the scheme and the possible implications to the Council.

Specifically the deputation requested that:

- CCC reconsider its view that the community wage is solely an employment issue, refer the matter for overview to the Strategy and Resources Committee and thereby to other relevant sections of CCC.
- CCC clarify for citizens the relationship between the CCC Community Development and Well-Being Policy and the CCC involvement in the Canterbury Development Corporation Policy and actions.
- CCC advocate the removal of legal sanctions from WINZ Community Work contracts.
- CCC become a “community with a conscience”.
- CCC support the “Jobs with Justice Campaign”, supporting the NZ Council of Christian Social Services’ minimum employment standards.
- CCC ascertain the legal status of a community wage recipient both when they are, and when they are not, involved in an “organised activity”.
- CCC develop a deliberate policy of recognising and resourcing the third sector of society, which stands alongside the other two sectors of Government and commerce.

Mr Jim Lamb and Ms Susan Stewart made representations on behalf of Jobs for Justice and endorsed the concerns raised by the previous deputation in respect of the community wage scheme, outlined their particular concerns and urged the Council to use the set of minimum standards developed by the New Zealand Standard of Social Services as a starting point for the development of a Council policy for its own employment practices and strategies and for any other group it promotes or supports.

Mr Ewan Coker, Poor People's Embassy, also addressed the Committee on this issue.

The Committee **decided**:

1. That staff be asked to report back to the Committee on the issues raised in the joint Council of Social Services/Community Volunteers' submission with particular reference to the legal status of community wage recipients, the use of sanctions, the impact on the Canterbury Development Corporation's operation if it withdrew from the scheme, and responsiveness to community views on the community wage strategy.
2. That a response also be sought from the Canterbury Development Corporation to the legal issues raised in the joint submission.
3. That the views of the Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce and relevant government agencies on the community wage strategy also be represented in the report, together with the policy relating to holiday pay.

RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED BY DEPUTATIONS

The joint Council of Social Services/Community Volunteers' submission on this issue covered a number of areas of concern stated from political and philosophic viewpoints. There has been some difficulty in reconciling these with the practical realities of how Canterbury Development Corporation (CDC) administer CW&T scheme.

The joint submission addressed the Community Wage in its generic form, with concentration on the contentious/punitive aspects of the scheme. As has often been the case, Christchurch has taken a Government initiative and made it responsive to the local environment. After applying this process to the Community Wage the CW&T emerged as a positive example of how it could be made workable in practice. The consequence of this is a scheme that in its emphasis on participation, achievement, and the realisation of goals has become substantially different from the vision of the Community Wage described in the joint submission.

LEGAL STATUS

1. People on the Community Wage are legally 'participants' and not 'employees'. They therefore retain their entitlements as citizens, but not employees in terms of qualifying for ACC etc.
2. There is no paid leave. Participant work no more than three days per week and CDC has been very flexible about changing work hours / days to accommodate individual circumstances.
3. Although sick leave is not a legal requirement of the Community Wage it has been offered to all participants on CW&T as if, for the duration of their participation, they are Council employees.
4. Because participants are not employees, any personal grievance procedure can not include the option of financial redress. With this exception all participants have a clear and accessible process available to them to deal with discrimination or harassment. It should be noted that no such case has arisen.
5. All CW&T Participant are covered by ACC in the same way that all New Zealand citizens are covered. If they sustain a work related injury medical and associated expenses are still available from ACC and the full amount of their benefit continues to be paid.

USE OF SANCTIONS

A distinction needs to be drawn between the legislation relating to the Community Wage and the CW&T scheme as administered by CDC. Although the legislation allows for the sanction of individuals, it is clearly a device of last resort, used sparingly at national level and not at all on the CW&T scheme.

Those on CW&T participate freely. The interests of the parties involved are not served by coercion and it has had no part in the development or implementation of CW&T.

IMPACT ON THE CANTERBURY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SCHEME

Withdrawal from CW&T would mean the loss of two contract positions and the redeployment of one permanent staff member. In addition much of the current training undertaken by CW&T participants is delivered or facilitated by officers of Employment Services. A cessation of this function would diminish the breadth of training available to the community and restrict access to all free training.

The CW&T contract more than covers the direct cost of the scheme. The staff supported, in full or part, by this contract also make considerable contributions to other aspects of the CDC.

The CDC is currently looking to use CW&T to underpin a partnership with Work and Income New Zealand, Pasefika Education and Employment Training Organisation (PEETO) and the Christchurch Polytechnic to

provide English language training, work experience opportunities, and employment to the city's refugee and migrant communities. This project, if it proceeds, has the potential to impact positively on an area of significant disadvantage. Without access to CW&T funding, these programmes will not proceed unless an alternative source of funding is found from the Council.

RESPONSIVENESS TO COMMUNITY VIEWS

The CDC is acutely aware of the need to be informed of, and responsive to, the diverse views represented in the Christchurch community. In deference to this, considerable community consultation was held to formulate the operation of CW&T. The result of this consultation process was "Communityworks." This was presented to Peter McCardle as Minister of Employment in May 1997 by Cora Baillie, Mature Employment Service, Graeme Mitchell, WaiOra and Brigid Lenihan, CDC.

The Minister made very favourable comments about "Communityworks" but insisted that there was no money available to provide supervision, training and clothing, boots, etc for participants. CDC resisted many approaches to participate in the standard Community Wage programme because it was felt that this was an exploitation of community groups and participants. They were keen to pursue with the "Communityworks" model which allowed for funding of these crucial elements.

A presentation to the Local Employment Coordination Group resulted in George Clark, then Area Manager for New Zealand Employment Service applying for funds to implement a local pilot programme of "Communityworks" CW&T, therefore, represents an enhanced Community Wage programme which provides excellent support, training and funding for any costs incurred by trainees. Participants are voluntary and have expressed sincere gratitude for the opportunity to take part. An example of a successful CW&T programme is the Smoke Alarm project, placing smoke alarms in thousands of Christchurch homes. This programme has been backed by the Fire Brigade as providing a very important service for citizens of Christchurch while increasing the safety of many homes, especially in low income areas.

There has been little community opposition to the CDC's involvement in CW&T. Many of those opposed to the scheme are unaware of how the CDC's programme differs from the standard Community Wage. Unfortunately invitations to explain the programme to them have not been accepted.

There is political opposition to the Community Wage scheme as a Government policy and personal philosophical opposition within some community groups. This opposition has its constituency as represented by the joint submission to the Council, but it is important to note that this constituency does not include the CDC, WINZ, the providers of work opportunities, or most importantly the participants themselves and their families.

COMMUNITY WORK AND TRAINING FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Ellen Loader, Project Co-ordinator commented:

- “1. CW&T is an opportunity for the participant to gain skills and confidence in their own ability.
2. Many graduates and other ex-students have not had experience in their area of study and need to prove to themselves and to future employers so that they can translate their learning in a practical environment. This is particularly relevant for those returning to the workforce after parenting or illness.
3. CDC itself has provided placements for five CW&T participants on reception at Actionworks. This has involved a lot of staff time in training but has resulted in 100% success in helping those people into full time, paid employment.
4. Many employers want people with knowledge and experience with work ethic. CW&T addresses these needs.
5. The difference in people's self esteem is visible. Within several days of starting on the programme, family members have phoned us and thanked us for giving their family member a chance and speak of the positive differences at home.
6. CW&T instills work ethic by offering an opportunity to have structure in their day
 - something to get up for,
 - interaction with people in the workplace,
 - building networks, both personal and professional.

7. People are eligible for CW&T from day one of registration with WINZ and many people after redundancy or returning from overseas just want something to do while they are job searching. They are used to being busy and enjoy that - they also enjoy the opportunity to contribute to their local community.
8. The positive results we have had so far have in the main been of the participants own doing. They are motivated to apply for positions, and interview more successfully because they have greater confidence in their own ability.

I believe CW&T is beneficial to all concerned,

- the person or persons who have offered the opportunity, as they get some work done,
- the participant as they are able to move forward,

and both Lee and I get great satisfaction when people are succeeding and join in their joy when they gain employment.”

CANTERBURY EMPLOYERS' CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber does not consider that the scheme constitutes any significant threat to existing jobs through displacement. The work being done is community based and additional to core activities. Without the support of the scheme, this work could not be done and the benefits enjoyed by the Christchurch community would not accrue.

CW&T is one of a number of measures being undertaken to increase the participation in the economy of the broadest possible group of citizens. The Chamber has long supported and acknowledged the success of the Adult Community Employment (ACE) scheme and views CW&T as an effective mechanism to reach those still beyond the scope of ACE.

Recommendation: That the Council endorse the Community Work and Training scheme as currently being implemented by the Canterbury Development Corporation.

(Note: Councillor Anderton requested that her vote against the foregoing recommendation be recorded.)