

2. 7. 99

REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

1. COMMUNITY AREAS AND WARDS WITHIN CHRISTCHURCH CITY

RR 9770

Officer responsible City Manager	Author Mike Richardson
Corporate Plan Output: Various	

BACKGROUND

The Council, in its submission to the Local Government Commission on the Draft Reorganisation Scheme for amalgamation with Banks Peninsula included the following request:

“...We therefore request that the Commission not promulgate a Final Reorganisation Scheme until the City Council has further considered and consulted with its residents on the proposed new electoral boundaries. The Council intends to resolve this matter on 26 August.”

All Council and Community Board elected members have had the opportunity of making comments to our local commissioners on their proposed scheme for future community and ward boundaries. As a result of this input and other considerations the local commissioners have produced a final report which has been previously circulated to all Councillors.

The local commission's job is now completed. The City Council must now take the lead in seeking community input.

The purpose of this report is to enable the Council to adopt an electoral proposal for consultation with the community and a framework for that task to take place over the next 5-6 weeks so as to enable a final decision to be made at the August Council meeting and forwarded to the Local Government Commission.

ADDITIONAL WORK UNDERTAKEN BY LOCAL COMMISSION

In preparing its revised report, the commission received submissions from some 35 individuals and groups. This included Council and Community Board elected members, City Council staff, some residents' groups, the Regional Council and the Christchurch Police. In the light of this consultation, the commissioners have revised their report and unanimously recommend their Option VIII as set out in figures 1 and 2 of their Part 1 summary report. I would identify the following key changes from their earlier recommendation:

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1. For Council electoral purposes the City would be divided into 11 wards each returning 2 Councillors. (In their previous proposal there were to have been 6 wards, each returning 2, 3, 4, or 5 Councillors reflecting the fact that their populations differed significantly.)
2. As in our current system, the general rule is that wards are paired to provide for a community area that comprises 2 wards with each ward electing 3 Community Board members. This applies to 5 out of 6 of the communities, but there remains an exception for the central city and surrounding inner suburb which has a population of roughly half of the suburban community areas and the community comprises a single ward with 6 community board members elected from that ward together with the 2 ward Councillors.
3. Their revised proposal would see the same pattern of (11) wards used for the election of both community board members and city Councillors. Previously, they had put forward the innovative suggestion that city Councillors be elected from larger ward areas and community board members from smaller community wards, reflecting the fact that the latter operate closer to the community.

We were required to undertake this review by the Local Government Commission, regardless of the amalgamation proposal. The Local Government Act lays considerable stress on communities of interest in establishing boundaries for local government purposes. The local commissioners' work has been extensive and intensive and their recommendation is unanimous. They recognise themselves that there are a number of instances in which boundaries have been modified from the ideal in order to achieve a reasonable measure of numerical balance. This has been most evidently the case with the boundary of the proposal central/inner city ward/community. No set of boundaries will ever be ideal. It is my view, however, that we have undertaken a good process with appropriate input from interested and expert parties and the resulting recommendations fulfil the requirements of the Local Government Act and the request from the Local Government Commission to undertake a comprehensive review.

There may be issues which have not come to the attention of the local commissioners or which have not been adequately reflected by them, but this will best be found out through a process of public consultation. The commissioners describe the advantages of the proposal (including its advantages over the current pattern) as follows:

“In recommending the ‘five spoke and hub’ pattern we are conscious that there will always be some adjustment and even resistance to changes such as those recommended here. However they should also be balanced with the long term advantages. The preferred options have the following advantages. They:

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- *represent a refinement of the existing situation rather than a dramatic change;*
- *recognise and align the community areas with significant and long term natural, physical and development patterns;*
- *refine the boundaries to match and strengthen the 'communities of interest';*
- *build on existing community strengths and arrangements and match them to future needs;*
- *reduce the suburban community areas from six to five with minimum dislocation to the existing community boards and the Council's services;*
- *provide a community board identity for city centre residents, daily inhabitants and inner city living areas;*
- *continue to build on the established strengths of community boards as units representing communities of interest and their accountability to both their communities and the City Council;*
- *retain a moderate population size for the community areas and wards;*
- *secure good electoral representation for both Council and boards;*
- *enable integration of the Lyttelton Basin with equitable representation as part of Ferrymead;*
- *propose Akaroa/Wairewa with a separate Councillor and ward as a special case (increasing the total number of Councillors to 23)."*

I would therefore recommend that the Council indicate an intention to adopt the boundaries as recommended by the local commissioners subject to any new information or perception being raised as a result of the public consultation exercise.

I would recommend one exception to this approach, relating to the Banks Peninsula area. With regard to Banks Peninsula, the commission recommends a different approach to that adopted by the Council in its submission to the Local Government Commission, namely the local commissioners recommend the integration of the Lyttelton Harbour Basin with Ferrymead for Council electoral purposes. Given that the Council explicitly considered this matter and resolved in a contrary direction (that is, that the whole of the Banks Peninsula District be treated as a single ward for Council electoral purposes) it would be appropriate for the Council to reject this recommendation from the local commission and maintain the position it established in its submission to the Local Government Commission.

If the Council accepts this approach, then it would be appropriate to undertake public consultation in a way that would set out the current pattern of ward community boundaries and contrast it with the proposed pattern of boundaries as a basis for submissions.

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In addition to seeking submissions on the extent to which the proposed boundaries will provide for adequate representation of communities of interest, it would also be appropriate to seek submissions on the names proposed for the wards and communities. I would suggest that this consultation be structured in 2 parts. First, ascertain whether communities should be known by the name of their composite wards, (eg Fendalton-Waimairi to take a current example) or whether they should have a unifying name distinct from their constituent wards. Secondly, the appropriateness of the names themselves which have been provisionally proposed by the local commissioners. I would note that the local commissioners have made it clear that they have devoted considerably less attention to their proposals for names than to their proposed boundaries, recognising that naming is a more subjective matter than the objectivity they have sought to bring to the issue of boundaries.

PROPOSED CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

Set out below is a proposed process for seeking community views, the outcome of which will assist the Council in determining its response to the Local Government Commission in late August.

Although the objective of the consultation process is to seek the views of Christchurch Citizens on the proposed community and ward boundaries and names, it will also raise awareness of the significance of communities of interest and so, community governance issues.

The following techniques are proposed for conducting the exercise:

- **City Scene**
Space in the July issue dedicated to giving information and seeking feedback. It is proposed to present the Commissioners preferred option along with the status quo for comparison purposes.

Feedback on suggested names will also be sought.

- **Residents/Stakeholders Group Meetings**
Residents groups and other stakeholders (eg, business associations, civic and professional groups) affected by boundary changes are likely to have views on the proposed changes and may wish to have some support in considering the issues.

It is proposed to hold four Resident Group/Public meetings – one each at Linwood, Sockburn and Papanui Service Centres and Civic Offices.

- **Research**
To gain more in depth feedback it is proposed to commission focus group research. The topic does not lend itself to telephone research.

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- **Special Groups**
We are investigating inviting schools to undertake a “community of interest” project.
- **Information Packs**
To be prepared for distribution on request and/or use at community/school meetings by the Community, Children and Youth Advocates.

With the exception of the focus group research (estimated to cost up to \$10,000) the cost of seeking community views can be met from existing budgets.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the techniques for seeking community views as outlined above be adopted.
 2. That up to \$10,000 be made available from the contingency for research on this matter.
 3. That the consultation process is focussed on seeking information and attitudes as to the implications of moving from the current pattern of boundaries to the proposed pattern and on the issue of names for the proposed community and ward areas.
 4. That the City Council reaffirm its view expressed in its submission to the Local Government Commission that the whole of the current Banks Peninsula District Council area be treated as a single ward for Council electoral purposes, but that 2 separate community boards be established to serve the Peninsula in the event of an amalgamation.
 5. That in addition to the citizens of Christchurch, the Banks Peninsula District Council be invited to comment on the boundary proposals in the City.

CONSIDERED THIS 2ND DAY OF JULY 1999

MAYOR