

3. LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

RR 9867

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Corporate Plan Output: Across all outputs.	

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors of a review of membership undertaken by a Library staff project team and to recommend changes of principle in relation to membership policy and practice.

Driving forces for a review of membership have been:

- Dissatisfaction with the processes for joining new members, which were seen as cumbersome, “authoritarian” and not particularly customer friendly.
- A need to simplify the categories of membership which were confusing to staff and which had grown up in an ad hoc fashion over many years.
- An outstanding request by a previous Community Services Committee for non city membership to be reviewed.

The desired outcomes from the review were:

- That membership parameters should provide fair and equitable access to all Christchurch citizens.
- That affirmative action be taken to assist those whose access was difficult by reason of a physical, mental or language disability.
- That membership parameters comply with any existing Council policies, eg Youth policy.
- That the experience of becoming a member is pleasant and welcoming and that the process of joining is easy and timely.
- That policies on those living outside the city and not City ratepayers were clear, consistent and equitable.

The Project Team has researched how other Local Authority public libraries handle membership of the library. They also talked with local commercial operations, eg Ballantynes regarding their parameters. They have analysed our data, consulted with library colleagues and made recommendations for change. The Community Services Committee was also consulted at a seminar meeting on 4 May 1999. Changes concerning our internal processes will be enacted without delay. The recommendations concerning changes to the membership policy require Committee adoption before proceeding with changes to membership categories.

MEMBERSHIP PARAMETERS

There are currently 25 plus categories of membership, each with slightly different parameters. The project team has recommended that the number of categories be reduced based on the following parameters:

- Membership of the library is open to all city residents, businesses and organisations without the payment of a joining fee.
- Membership is required for the borrowing of materials and for access to certain information services.
- Direct charges for the extended use of materials beyond the free loan period and the reservation of specific items will apply to all members except in the following circumstances:
 - Youth city residents (0-17 years);
 - Permanent concession holders who by reason of physical, mental or permanent literacy problems are unable to access library resources in the normal way;
 - Bulk loans to kindergartens and preschools, prisons and rest homes.
- Direct charges for borrowing of audiovisual materials will apply to all members except in the following circumstances:
 - Permanent concession holders who by reason of physical, mental or permanent literacy problems are unable to access library resources in the normal way;
 - Youth city residents (0-17 years) who receive a 50% discount;
 - Holders of the Community Services card who are entitled to a 50% discount on the production of this card.
- Residents living outside the Christchurch City boundaries and who do not pay rates to the city are eligible for membership without the payment of a joining fee. In addition to any direct charges applying to city members, they will be required to pay either a per item charge or an annual subscription to borrow library materials.
- Visitors who are resident in the city for up to three months may join the library without the payment of a joining fee. Special conditions apply depending on whether they are a current member of a local authority library in New Zealand. The number of items borrowed is limited.

The impact of these changes on current members is as follows:

- Young Adults aged 13 to 17 will no longer pay extended loan fees
- Senior Citizen privilege of half price audiovisual materials will only apply to those who are holders of the Community Services card
- Non-City children and Non-City senior citizens will no longer receive the same concessions as city residents.

- A proportion of current adult members will be entitled to a 50% concession on audiovisual materials on the production of a community services card
- The parameters surrounding concessions for those with a permanent disability will be tightened. Those no longer eligible are expected to qualify for the concessions applying to Community Services card holders.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW PARAMETERS

It is very difficult to assess the financial implications of these changes. There is potential loss of income from no longer requiring Young Adults to pay extended loan charges. In reality, however, we are getting very little of this revenue anyway. What tends to happen is the young person, having returned the item(s) through the slot, does not come back to the library because they cannot afford to pay. The amounts outstanding are too small to be economical for us to send out invoices and pursue payment, yet they are large amounts to someone without any income.

There is potential income from the changes made to non resident members. This proposal introduces charges for the borrowing of materials by children and senior citizens. At October 1998 we had 2,611 children registered from 7 different local authorities. The majority of these were with Selwyn District Council and many of these would come in under the arrangement we have with Selwyn to service the former Selwyn “rump” residents and the Rolleston residents. There were also 2,047 Young Adult members from the 7 local authorities, with the majority of these being resident in Selwyn District. If they continued to borrow we could see some additional revenue. The more likely scenario is that they will reduce or cease their use of the city’s libraries and turn more to their own libraries. They will still have access to the libraries and be able to use materials in situ free of charge. It would be our intention to market the Family subscription as an alternative for non city members.

There is potentially a small revenue gain from the over 60s paying full price for audiovisual materials but it is not significant.

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Marketing the changes to membership parameters to customers will be very important. Communication needs to cover not only the changes but also the outcomes to be achieved from the changes. An appropriate awareness campaign is planned, as are new brochures and conditions of membership outlining the benefits to and responsibilities of members.

Recommendation: That the membership parameters as outlined in this report be approved, subject to the amendment of the “youth” city resident category from 0-17 years to 0-18 years of age.