

The Chairman reported:

The Mayor has proposed a “power deal shop” to provide the public with independent advice on the offers available from various electricity retailers. The Mayor is concerned that the public remains confused despite the newspaper advertisements informing consumers of the 0800 numbers of various alternative electricity retailers.

All Councillors have been concerned at the impact on low income households of the 13% increase imposed by TransAlta/Southpower. Fears have been expressed by social service agencies that some people will not be able to afford to heat their homes adequately during the winter, and that this will damage their health.

The Mayor’s initiative is a practical way of helping consumers to save money on power bills by switching to a retailer with lower charges. Costs are expected to be modest, as the proposal is to operate the “power shop” for a limited period, during which time it may be possible to second some staff and make use of capable people from the Mature Employment Service. A high profile venue is desirable, but only a small area will be required.

The Mayor is confident that the retailers will co-operate with this operation which could assist ordinary Christchurch people in choosing the retailer they wish to trade through.

The Committee, in endorsing the proposal put forward by the Mayor, requested the City Manager to report to the Council on the likely cost and form of the service to be provided.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Mayor’s initiative be endorsed, with rent and other necessary costs to be met from the contingency fund, subject to the approval of the Director of Finance.
  2. That the advisory service also be provided from appropriate service centres.
  3. That the Council write to electricity retailers seeking details of their tariffs and a commitment to the future certainty of such tariffs.