

1. CO-OPERATION WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT

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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on:

- moves by the Canterbury Forum to develop co-operative working relationships with the new Central Government
- the outcome of the forum held between the Prime Minister and members of her Cabinet and Local Government New Zealand.

It then presents for consideration a possible approach that the Council might take to working with the new government.

THE CANTERBURY FORUM

The Canterbury Forum is a meeting of the mayors and chief executives of all the territorial local authorities in the Canterbury region, together with the chairperson of the Canterbury Regional Council. In general its brief is to consider and progress matters where co-operative action between local authorities within Canterbury would be mutually beneficial. Items likely to be considered during this year include:

Relationship with Central Government;
Roading and transport changes;
The Emergency Management Group;
Rural development issues;
Canterbury 150th Anniversary celebrations;
Economic development and tourism; and,
Progress on inter-Council co-operation at the operational level (for example joint purchasing).

LOCAL-CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATION

The tabled paper was prepared at the request of the forum. It deals with the opportunities for co-operation between the local authorities in Canterbury and the new government in the areas of social, economic and employment policies. The Forum considered this paper at its meeting on 13 March 2000 and agreed the following:

Economic Development and Employment

Agreed that the Canterbury Forum:

- (a) *Supports taking a lead role in the development of a (regional) economic development strategy covering:*

- *The key objectives of economic development.*
- *The key sectors which have potential to enhance economic development.*
- *The barriers to growth in these areas.*
- *How these barriers can and should be addressed.*
- *Practical projects and initiatives.*

(b) Ask the Canterbury Development Corporation to lead the process of developing this strategy working with a sub-group of the following councils.

*Christchurch
Canterbury Region
Banks Peninsula
Hurunui
Waimakariri
Selwyn
Kaikoura
Timaru and Ashburton through the Aoraki Development Board*

with the aim being to have a draft strategy ready for consideration at the Forum's meeting on 15 May 2000.

Building Communities

Agreed that the Canterbury Forum expresses its support for community development and requests from Local Government New Zealand details on how we can assist in the most appropriate way.

Health

Agreed that it was not appropriate for the Canterbury Forum to develop a proposal for the management and administration of Health Boards.

Partnerships with Central Government

Agreed:

(a) That the Canterbury Forum actively participates in the initiatives of central government to work in partnership with local government.

FORUM BETWEEN LOCAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

One of the commitments in the Labour election manifesto was that a Labour Government would initiate a regular forum between local and central government to identify policy issues requiring debate and further work and to develop a long term coherent strategy for local government as a whole.

The first of these forums was held in Wellington on 7 March 2000. It was chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by several members of her Cabinet together with the National Council of Local Government New Zealand. It was agreed that the forum had three long term objectives:

- To identify key issues of significance to either or both partners and agree priorities for addressing them.
- To identify issues of common interest and explore opportunities for jointly resolving them.
- To give and receive feedback on the contribution of each sector on matters of shared national and local importance.
- It was also agreed to request officials from both sectors to prepare a strategic policy framework for local government for consideration at the next forum (to be held in six months' time) and to address the following issues as a matter of shared importance:

Economic Development
Community Development, Social Cohesion and Housing
Environment
Roading and Transport
Treaty of Waitangi
Local Government Legislation
Financial Framework (Rating Powers Act)

THE COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT

We are already contributing to a number of the above areas:

The Canterbury Development Corporation has already begun to work on the Canterbury Forum project on economic development and employment and is confident it can have the draft strategy ready by the May deadline. This work fits in well with the Prime Minister's Forum's commitment to local-central co-operation on economic development.

The Legal Services Manager is on the Working Party and on the officers' group for Local Government New Zealand's Local Government Act review.

We are co-ordinating through the Community Roads Group, an evaluation of alternative models for reorganisation of roading.

Councillor Close is a member of a Local Government New Zealand working party on the reform of the Rating Powers Act.

One of the areas identified in the forum between central government and Local Government New Zealand for joint action between the two parties is “community development, social cohesion and housing”. The full text of the communique on this issue is as follows:

“We (LGNZ) called for innovative approaches to resolve local, social dislocations. This struck a good chord and was clearly where Steve Maharey is heading. He talked of the coalition government’s commitment to social investment alongside economic investment and how keen he is to improve initiatives already in existence so their value is much improved. He wants to work with our sector on strategies to build stronger communities.”

We understand from Local Government New Zealand there is not yet a clear work plan in place to progress this area of co-operation between central and local government. It lies very much at the heart of efforts made by this Council in recent years to improve the co-ordination and so the impact within our community of the range of programmes delivered by central and local government and the community sector. Councillors will be aware of a range of specific initiatives and the more general advocacy which we have given to the concept of “community governance”.

Central Government’s willingness to work with local government in this area may provide a particularly good opportunity for the Council to progress the work we have undertaken to date. We believe we have a clear understanding and an ability to articulate both the concept and also a growing number of good examples of implementation on the ground.

There is an opportunity for the City Council to offer, through the offices of Local Government New Zealand, to make a significant contribution to a national task force aimed at addressing these issues. Potentially Christchurch City Council could contribute experience from the level of overall framework to that of detailed implementation. The same is true of other Councils such as Manukau and Waitakere among the cities and a number of Canterbury Councils among the rural territorial authorities. Potentially a task force could therefore bring together such elements from local government together with those central government service delivery departments which have greatest impact on the issue of community development, social cohesion and housing, plus representatives of community agencies from the national level. The scope of a task force could be along the following lines:

1. To recommend ways to achieve better integration of service delivery programmes.
2. To recommend processes for joint priority setting by government agencies and local councils.

3. To recommend ways of involving the community in priority setting to ensure differing local needs are met.
4. To establish co-ordinated monitoring to assess the effectiveness of programmes in achieving community and social wellbeing outcomes.

If the Council is of the view that the current central government climate provides a rare opportunity to make significant progress in these areas then the implementation of the above approach would imply the commitment of significant time (say 20 – 40%) from key individuals in the organisation. It would be necessary to put in place a series of “acting” arrangements to cover reduced resources in these areas and this would inevitably lead to some delays in some projects for the period of involvement.

It is our view that an offer to play a leading role in establishing a framework at a national level may well have significant benefit provided the following criteria are fulfilled:

1. Strong support from the appropriate Ministers of the Crown.
2. Support and commitment from the New Zealand Local Government sector, in particular commitment of time and effort from at least two other Councils and support in principle from LGNZ.
3. Substantial support from the Christchurch City Council as a whole and acceptance of the rescheduling of priorities which would inevitably result during a period of significant part time secondments.

The Chairman commented:

The Prime Minister has sent a clear signal that the Government wishes to work in partnership with local government to achieve various community objectives. Here in Christchurch we have led the way by developing co-operative relationships with the New Zealand Police, Work and Income New Zealand, Ministry of Education, health authorities and other government agencies. We now have the opportunity to enhance the partnership between central and local government in Christchurch and to assist other parts of the country to develop similar partnerships. The suggestion of seconding some of our staff to a taskforce on these issues makes good sense.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council offer, in consultation with Local Government New Zealand, to allow key staff to participate in taskforces to develop co-operative partnerships on economic and community development.

2. That, should the offer be accepted, a further report on the implications of the Council's involvement be brought to the Committee.
3. That the Council endorse the development of an economic development strategy for Canterbury and seek a progress report from the Canterbury Development Corporation for the May meeting of this Committee.
4. That the West Coast councils be invited to participate in the economic development forum.
5. That the Council support, in principle, the devolution of responsibilities to local government, subject to appropriate funding arrangements.