

3. STATUS OF CENTRAL CITY MAYORAL FORUM AND RELATIONSHIP TO CENTRAL CITY MARKETING

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BACKGROUND

At its June meeting the Council adopted a Statement of Corporate Intent for the Central City Board and the terms of reference for the Central City Mayoral Forum. At that meeting I undertook to report further on the formal status of the Mayoral Forum. I have also been asked to report on the manner in which the forum might exercise oversight over central city marketing.

CENTRAL CITY MARKETING

In the current year the Council has funded \$135,000 for marketing the central city. This activity was put in place by the Council in 1994 and was reviewed during the 1999 Annual Planning cycle when it was determined that the activity would be phased out over two years. That is, the activity is not funded in the Council's financial plan and programme beyond June 2001.

This central city marketing activity has the purpose of marketing the central city to the people of Christchurch as a destination for retailing and entertainment. The implementation of the function has been in house and has involved extensive networking and consultation with Christchurch retailers and other central city businesses and the collation and publication of booklets, placing of newspaper advertisements, etc. Significant success has been achieved in co-ordinating opening hours and building more explicit links between entertainment events taking place in the central city and retailing.

This is a "nitty gritty" operational function which is planned to be phased out by the end of the current financial year.

I understand that considerable discussion has taken place within the Interim Development Board of the need to market the central city. Much of this discussion relates to a different form of central city marketing to the above. Its objective is couched in terms of marketing the central city as a location for investment; for developers, and also for businesses and for people to live.

The central city marketing activity of Council, which is in its final year of funding, is overviewed by Strategy and Resources Committee. I would advise that this is a day-to-day operational function the methods and relationships for which have been developed over the last four years and should continue to run within its current framework for the balance of the financial year.

Once the Mayoral Forum has recommended a concept plan to the City Council it would be appropriate for it to give some consideration to central city marketing in terms of the attraction of investment and also perhaps the attraction of shoppers and visitors. It seems likely that this will give rise to proposals for the marketing of the central city as a location for investment. Such proposals would be then considered by the City Council and compete for funding within Council's next financial plan round or, alternatively, if more appropriate, passed to the Central City Development Board. It is also possible that the central city Forum will recommend that the Council reintroduce funding for marketing the central city as a retail and visitor destination, in which case I would anticipate that a proposal would be brought forward for consideration during the 2001 financial plan round.

If this general approach is supported then the role of the forum with regard to central city marketing is one of strategising, planning and recommending rather than one of implementation.

STATUS OF THE MAYORAL FORUM

A number of statements are included in the terms of reference adopted by the Council. It is stated that the Mayoral Forum will be "constituted by a group of stakeholders from a range of interests to provide support for the Mayor, Council and the Central City Board to achieve central city revitalisation". It is also stated that the Mayoral Forum will work "in partnership with the City Council".

The Council adopted a "programme targets and measures" for the work of the Mayoral Forum. These require the forum to develop the concept plan and strategic programme for the central city, but note that the concept plan will be approved by the Council, and then list a range of tasks in which the forum will "work closely with the Christchurch City Council to facilitate business and community input ...".

In the past the Council has operated with both a central city standing committee and also a central city subcommittee (in the term before last). In each case these were established as Council committees with the delegated responsibility for implementing projects and programmes within the central city – like any other Council committee such as City Services or Community Services. It seems to me that the intention of the Mayoral Forum is significantly different. It is to bring together a number of individuals who have a combination of expertise and interest in the central city on one hand, and are also stakeholders able to themselves influence decision-making of other organisations on the other. Constituted in this way the primary role is one of a catalyst: to generate ideas, to ask questions, to stimulate debate, to generate enthusiasm and a climate for decisions to be taken by a range of stakeholders leading to central city revitalisation.

TYPES OF LEGAL STRUCTURE

Broadly, there are three types of structure available to us.

Firstly, the forum could be constituted as a standing committee or special committee of the Council. Although not restricted to this purpose the Local Government Act envisages that committees will be established for the purposes of conducting the local authority's business and so the Act provides for matters to be delegated to such a committee. As indicated above, this is the model used during the last term for the Central City Committee which had specific powers delegated to it and took responsibility for monitoring the implementation of part of the Council's Annual Plan. A Council committee established in this way would have meetings which were open to the public and would generally follow standing order procedures.

In my view this is the appropriate structure to use if significant specific responsibilities are to be carried out by the Mayoral Forum.

Secondly, the forum could be constituted as a working party. This would enable a more informal meeting process to be adopted and would not require public notification of such meetings. The forum would be able to consider reports and advise but would not be able to make specific decisions.

Thirdly, a separate legal entity could be established such as a trust. In this case the Council (presumably) would fund the trust and might well also provide administrative support, as it does for instance to Sister City Committees.

Up to the present time the Interim Development Board has functioned as a Council working party.

IMPLICATIONS

There are three areas of implications which I suggest might be considered: mode of operation, access to Council staff and consultants, and payment of members.

With regard to mode of operation the Mayoral Forum to date has operated using facilitation and consensus building techniques and has not operated as a forum for debate and resolution of issues through voting. Given the community governance principles which underlie the forum, I would suggest that it is essential for this mode of operation to continue. At this time there are no specific delegated responsibilities of the Council which the forum is being asked to undertake. What is needed, therefore, is a structure which provides for flexibility, which fosters creativity and consensus building rather than a structure to resolve opposing points of view and reach decisions for implementation. From this point of view, therefore, I would recommend that a working party or trust structure would be most appropriate, rather than a Council committee structure.

Secondly, access to staff and consultants. A great deal of work has already been undertaken and a strand of work is currently in hand to develop a draft concept plan for the central city. This work combines the knowledge of Council staff such as parks professionals, traffic engineers, planners, property staff, together with the fresh perspective and “outside view” of a consultant with strong skills in urban design and experience in central city revitalisation. It would seem appropriate for this combination to continue. If the forum gets too far away from Council – at either staff or elected member level – then the necessary integration back into Council decision-making processes will be lost, but if it is dominated by Council staff and elected members then the flow of fresh ideas and perspectives will be lost. I conclude, therefore, that it is necessary for there to be a mechanism whereby those integrally involved in the Mayoral Forum initiative are able to select external consultancy services in order to complement the staff resources which will be available to them. If the Mayoral Forum is a working party of Council then I would propose that the Central City Project Manager (currently Mark Bachels) have delegated authority from the Council to enter into contracts of up to \$50,000; any larger contracts would need to be reported to Strategy and Resources Committee for decision. There would be no difficulty for a trust or Council standing committee in entering into contracts.

From the point of view of payment of members, this would be normal practice if the forum was constituted as a committee of the Council but is specifically not possible if the forum is a working party or a trust.

CONCLUSION

The key purpose of the Mayoral Forum is not to undertake the implementation of Council policies under delegated authority, it is to act as a catalyst bringing together a group with expertise and energy to make an innovative and creative contribution to frameworks and ideas for revitalising the central city. The forum should not operate within the mould of Council processes yet at the same time must have good and close working links back into the City Council. It will not be taking responsibility for implementation of significant budget (\$150,000 is proposed for the concept plan work). I would therefore advise that a working party structure would be simplest and most appropriate.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Mayoral Forum operate as a working party.
 2. That the City Manager report to the August meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee in more detail on the procedure for servicing the Mayoral Forum by a combination of external consultants and Council staff and on the allocation of funds as between the Central City Mayoral Forum and the Central City Board.