

1. REPORT FROM CITY MANAGER

CONSULTATION – OVERVIEW

Mike Richardson spoke to his report on an overview of consultation.

The report contained the following extract from his report to the Strategy and Resources Committee in April 2001:

“In terms of the community relationship the effectiveness of public consultation should be reviewed. For some four years now the Council has operated under its ‘Seeking Community Views Policy’. There are some outstanding examples of effective consultation and of consultation which appears to be far too costly relative to the value of the project or programme in question.”

He pointed out that, with regard to consultation as experienced by the community and by the Council in making decisions, there are two main areas where areas could be improved, these being:

- clarity/consistency; and
- effectiveness.

As to clarity/consistency, the City Manager suggested a citizens’ charter for consultation as an objective.

“This would be expressed not so much in terms of the form which consultation would take, but more in terms of the expectations that the community should have around when and how they may influence specific types of Council decisions.”

He also suggested that consultation should be built into project process mapping.

With consultation, the City Manager recommended early identification and closer attention to the linkages between projects and programmes for the holistic management of consultation.

In terms of effectiveness, the City Manager signalled the *“important issue of avoiding consultation unless it is clear that community input can and should meaningfully influence the decision which is made regarding a project or programme”*. The report contained a diagram which highlighted his submission that consultation should not be seen in isolation from other Council activities.

The City Manager also advised:

- The aim of greater clarity and consistency and improved effectiveness is outcomes which are likely to be generally agreed to.
- The report, “Review of Seeking Community Views Policy and Practices”, from Mary Richardson and Philippa Joughin, reflects views from within the staff organisation, and is a useful starting point for discussion on consultation.
- It will be critical in working through the detailed design of consultation practices that the Committee engages with those staff who are involved in the front line of consultation.
- Forms of consultation will vary from community to community.
- Consultation and communication are different in the way such areas are managed. The Council has a communications team, but not a consultation unit. A report being placed before the Strategy and Finance Committee later this month, on governance, has relevance to the question of consultation and communication.

Discussion points included:

- Consultation generally successful at smaller localised areas. Not so with some metropolitan projects.
- Greater use of mediators/facilitators to control “pressure group capture”.
- Increased delegation (and follow-up strategies) to Community Boards should improve consultation.
- Public perception of Council responsibilities and initiatives.
- Effective consultation is providing the community with information at an early stage.