

7. ACHESON AVENUE SOCIAL SERVICES

General Manager responsible:	Stephen McArthur
Officer responsible:	Catherine McDonald
Author:	Bruce Meder, DDI 941-5408

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an information update to assist the Board in determining a strategic direction for the Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop) arose in response to a combined Council staff and elected member project team. The team was charged with the task of addressing the situation around the Acheson Avenue shops and surrounding area.
3. A shop in Acheson Avenue (No. 25) was leased from 1 October 2004 at an annual rental of \$10,400 (+ GST) for two years with two rights of renewal for two years each. The facility was officially opened on 14 February 2005.
4. Since opening, the facility has not met expectations of the Council nor of the local community. The project team's initial concept was for the development of an "urban heartland centre" which would accommodate various governmental and statutory agencies. The aim was to provide the local community with "...easier access to services and support."
5. Currently, Truancy Services is based there five days per week, Housing NZ have two staff present on Tuesday mornings, the local Police Constable is there on an "as-needed" basis, as is the Delta Support Trust Youth Worker.
6. The Board presently allocates \$6,000 per annum towards the underwriting of the rental from its Project Fund. It now seems timely that a thorough review of the project take place before the Board commits further funds towards any renewal of the lease (due on 1 October 2006).

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7. The Council currently has a two year lease of the property at 25 Acheson Avenue beginning 1 October 2004. The lease includes a further two rights of renewal of two years each from 1 October 2006. The total rental is \$10,400 (+ GST) per annum.
8. The Shirley/Papanui Community Board has contributed \$6,000 annually to the underwriting of this rental for the previous two financial years (i.e. 2004/05 and 2005/06) from its Project Fund. There is a further bid for \$6,000 in the coming Project Funding round (i.e. for 2006/07).
9. A further \$35,500 of Council funds has been expended on this project for refurbishment costs. A number of local youth have also contributed voluntary time to painting the interior and exterior of the building.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board agree to a thorough, independent, review of the Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop), to include the following:

- Looking into how this community facility can best meet the needs of a range of groups within the immediate Shirley area.
- Looking at why this facility is not currently meeting Council expectations.
- Considering whether renewing the lease for the facility will meet Council expectations in the future.

CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATIONS

That, before the Board commits any further funding to this project, staff convene a meeting with the Board's Sub Committee (comprised of Graham Condon, Megan Evans, Yvonne Palmer and Norm Withers) including all relevant Government agencies, to discuss the future viability of this project.

BACKGROUND ON ACHESON AVENUE SOCIAL SERVICES (ONE-STOP-SHOP)

10. The area around the Acheson Avenue shops has been the subject of many submissions to Council during its Annual Plan consultation. Councillors and Community Board members have also fielded queries related to this issue for a number of years.
11. During early 2004 a project grouping of staff and elected members was convened under the leadership of the Strategic Development section of the Council's Policy Unit.
12. A number of possibilities for redevelopment of this area were put forward from within that project grouping, including the option of an "urban heartland centre". The purpose of this centre was to "...bring together a number of agencies providing a positive and protective influence, whilst enabling the community to have easier access to services and support."
13. Between January and April 2004 Council received letters from interested agencies with respect to the urban heartland centre:
 - NZ Police indicated commitment to the project, a willingness to share lease costs, to contribute to office equipment, providing a telephone line and sharing office management.
 - District Truancy Service indicated a commitment to the project, to maintain a presence in the Centre Monday to Friday, to provide office furniture, to contribute to telephone and power costs, to be responsible for internal cleaning on a daily basis and to working with the Police to cover the costs of an alarm system.
 - WINZ indicated a willingness to provide trends information regarding the Shirley area. No commitment to a presence at the centre was given.
 - Housing NZ indicated a willingness to work with the Council to improve the Shirley area. No commitment to a presence at the centre was given.
14. At its February 2004 meeting the Shirley/Papanui Community Board agreed to underwrite rental of the premises for the 2003/04 financial year and a further underwriting to a maximum of \$6,000 per annum for the next two years (i.e. 2004/05 and 2005/06).
15. In September 2004 a public meeting was held to inform residents of the urban heartland centre plan. Attendance at this meeting by local residents was low.
16. Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop) was officially opened at a dawn ceremony on 14 February 2005. Between this opening and May 2005 Truancy Services were the only occupier. In June 2005 two Housing NZ staff began basing themselves there on Tuesday mornings. In July 2005 the local Constable also indicated that he would base himself there on Tuesday mornings on an "as-needed" basis.
17. During 2005 elected members and Council staff fielded complaints from local residents as to the centre being "never open".
18. In December 2005 the newly appointed Delta Community Support Trust Youth Worker also began to base himself at the premises on an "as-needed" basis.
19. In order to provide the Community Board with an updated status report on the Acheson Avenue facility, the Community Development Adviser contacted all members of the Shirley Inter-agency Community Network to gauge local community feedback on the facility. Through this contact, community groups were also asked if any of the organisations had "...any interest in possibly using this building in any way, or if (they) knew of any possible use in addition to those (existing users)."

20. As a result of that letter the following responses were returned:

Rev. Timi, but the group has since found alternative premises.

- Emmet Street Christian Fellowship for counselling purposes. However, the premises do not presently offer sufficient privacy for this purpose.
- SF Pegasus could be interested in basing someone there one morning a week.
- A budgeting service, although they would have the same issues of lack of privacy as that for the Emmet Street Christian Fellowship.

The Issues

21. In making a decision regarding its future involvement with the Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop), the Board may wish to consider the following issues:

- The up-take by governmental and statutory agencies for accommodation at the facility is well below expectations.
- The building is in need of significant repair to make it more habitable. During the winter of 2005 there were constant leaks and the building was difficult to heat. This incommodious situation is not only potentially unhealthy for human occupation, but could also be damaging to equipment, especially computer equipment.
- There appears to be little demand for premises of this nature by other organisations working in the area. If a demand of any nature does exist it appears to be of two, diverse, types:
 - Accommodation for counselling and budgeting type services which require privacy.
 - Larger premises for youth activities and indoor recreation opportunities.

OPTIONS

22. The Community Board has three options available:

- a) Continue with the present arrangement, whereby a further two year lease would be taken out on 1 October 2006.
- b) Cease funding the Acheson Avenue Social Services (one-stop-shop), effectively ending the lease of the building as at 30 September 2006.
- c) Undertake a thorough, independent review of the facility before making any decision regarding a further two year lease (or not).

PREFERRED OPTION

23. There appears to be sufficient unresolved issues relating to the facility that would suggest that a full review take place before final decisions are made. For this reason, Option c) above is preferred.