



ACHIEVING BEST PRACTICE FOR CHRISTCHURCH'S COMMUNITY BOARDS TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY WELLBEING COORDINATION IN POST EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY

Board Chairperson's Report to the Akaroa/Wairewa Community Board

Introduction

1. There have been many calls for "the community" to be consulted but also to participate in the Christchurch Earthquake recovery, particularly in the suburbs, **settlements and towns** where residents live.
2. The combined Christchurch Community Board Chairpersons recognise that to achieve best practice outcomes for earthquake recovery the Boards must play a key role in local recovery. Furthermore the Boards are currently the best placed institutions in our community to undertake this role, especially given their well established history as effective advocates for local community matters.
3. In order for the Community Boards to play a key role in this essential work the Board Chairpersons consider that some critical changes need to be made as a matter of urgency. This report identifies some of the key changes.
4. The combined Christchurch Community Board Chairpersons are pleased to present the following overview and recommendations arising from recent deliberations.
5. The Board Chairpersons believe the Council, the Boards and the community should celebrate what is overall working well. However together we should also strive to achieve best practice in participatory democracy. To achieve the necessary improvements and to assist residents in all of Christchurch's suburbs, **settlements and towns** in the recovery of social wellbeing, it will be essential to focus on strengthening the connections between the key organisations involved. These would include Community Boards, the Council, **Canterbury** Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA), Red Cross, GeoTech, City Care and Environment Canterbury (Ecan).

Strengths of Christchurch's Eight Community Boards

6. International best practice for post-disaster recovery unequivocally identifies the need for both democratic local governance and local community participation in decision design and decision making. Given the urgent need to restore and improve Christchurch's urban villages, Christchurch's Community Boards need to play key roles in the local recovery. Our Community Boards' strengths include:
 - (a) being democratically elected by our local communities
 - (b) being legally mandated to represent our local communities
 - (c) having a wealth of historical knowledge of our local communities
 - (d) having existing mechanisms for formally listening to our local community groups and communities
 - (e) having existing mechanisms for summarising local community group needs and sharing them
 - (f) having been actively working closely with community groups continuously for many years and more intensely since the earthquakes following September 2010 and later earthquakes. We are very aware of how community groups are seriously struggling to cope at the moment, both socially and economically – they need a lot of local help. At an individual and family level, especially concerning the elderly, many residents need social wellbeing support.
 - (g) continuing our local governance roles after the recovery process and CERA have concluded

- (h) having existing systems for distributing funding to local community groups
- (i) having existing mechanisms for monitoring how well local community groups are using public funding
- (j) being well aware of our own capabilities and constraints and hence what is possible for Community Boards to do locally with existing and potential additional resources
- (k) being Christchurch's best bridge between local grass-roots society and the City Council, and the Government
- (l) having a large group of committed and enthusiastic Board members with diverse skills and extensive local community connections who wish to contribute to Christchurch's recovery at the local level.

7. The Board Chairpersons believe our Community Boards exhibit many of the internationally proven ideal characteristics for driving local recovery. Over the past year our Community Boards have worked to create and coordinate semi-structured responsiveness where there existed confusion and uncertainty. We are committed to being a part of a more structured, deliberate, inclusive and participatory recovery process with the Council, CERA and other agencies.

Community Board Practice Currently Working Well

Role of the Community Boards

8. The role of Community Boards is clearly defined in section 52 of the Local Government Act 2002, which is to:
- Represent and act as an advocate for the interests of the community.
 - Consider and report on any matter referred to it by the territorial local authority and any issues of interest to the community board.
 - Make an annual submission to the territorial local authority on expenditure in the local authority.
 - Maintain an overview of services provided by the territorial authority within the community.
 - Communicate with community organisations and special interest groups in the community, and undertake any other responsibilities delegated by the local authority.
9. The Board Chairpersons consider that it is important to showcase constructive processes and our positive achievements. After reviewing a range of documents and information (e.g. the Best Practice Recovery Workshop held at Lincoln University and the work of EQC chairperson, Professor Bruce Glavovic) the Chairpersons considered that the following aspects are working well:
- The Boards know and understand their communities well.
 - The Boards represent residents well. The approachable and informal nature of the Community Board setting is strength.
 - Residents utilise Deputations to advocate regarding a wide range of issues.
 - Boards mediate/facilitate well.

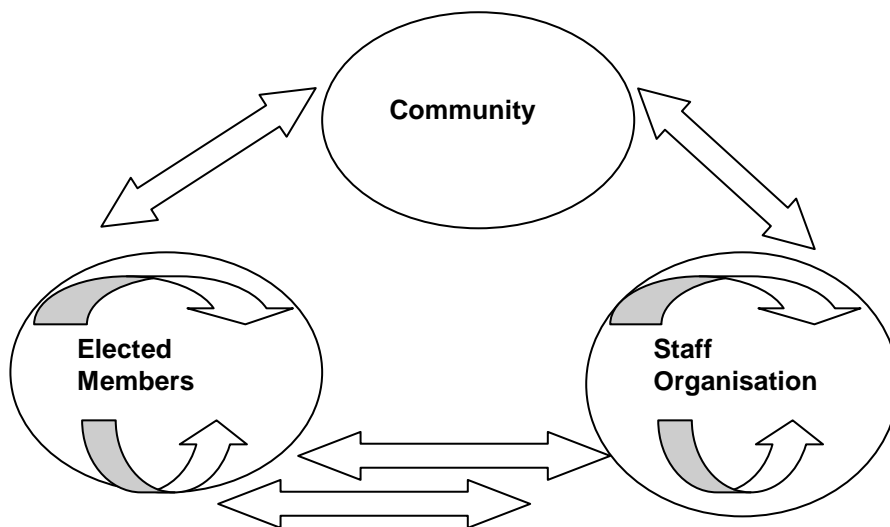
Next Steps

10. The focus of community boards has changed since September 2010 towards earthquake recovery.
11. The Board Chairs applaud the various recovery interventions from the Council, CERA, Geotech, Red Cross, City Care and other government departments. However, we consider that the Earthquake recovery roles of each organisation, as well as Community Boards, all need to be more clearly defined and coordinated.
12. The development of more detailed Community Board strategies and coordination of action in our communities and at street level for post-earthquake recovery, redesign and redevelopment.

Using Best Practice To Bring About More Effective Operation Of Community Boards.

13. The Chairpersons consider that the following matters should be addressed:
 - To achieve a timely response there needs to be a refocus of staff resources at the service centre level. This would include decision making ability being decentralised to the local service centre level. An outcome would be effective implementation of locally centred decision making which is imperative especially with regard to earthquake recovery matters.
 - More reflective and timely ways of communicating back to the community, rather than formal approaches via a report are needed. On the other hand there is often a lack of clarity for residents following some earthquake recovery meetings. Community Boards could streamline the process by working with staff to resolve matters more informally and establish ongoing relationship building/engagement with the ward's communities.
 - There needs to be more decision making available on the spot. A more proactive approach is hindered by procedures requiring Board reports and there is a need for improved ongoing collaborative working relationships. (e.g. Small money matters requested from Boards to assist with community projects).
 - Connection/communication between staff and the Boards and with outside organisations including CERA could be better achieved by more flexible and more carefully coordinated processes.
 - Earthquake recovery could be better facilitated by focusing on accessing and using local level institutional knowledge. e.g. hills meetings re rockfall earthquake issues.
14. In the development of local area plans there needs to be a high degree of collaborative working with CERA especially given the development of new community resilience and ward plan positions at CERA. This connection could be undertaken by local community board earthquake coordinators. The existing institutional knowledge with regard to networks and organisations working in each ward needs to be accessed to ensure best practice earthquake recovery processes. As pointed out by most researchers, trust is the most important ingredient in disaster recovery and implementing change.

15. A Model of Building Trust:



“...building trust is a focus of attention in local governments that are building organisations to change and improve.

... there is wide (and deep) agreement that building trust is essential in the context of organising for change and improvement.

... trust and the implementation of the change strategies go hand in hand ... it can be said with certainty that it is the most essential and important precondition for instigation of an innovative administration”

Source: Building Trust in Local Government, “Cities of Tomorrow Network”

Local Democracy: Need For A Greater Advocacy Role

16. The Chairpersons note that each Community Board represents the interests of particular communities. The Chairpersons consider that the time is crucial for community recovery; they believe that Community Boards should play a stronger role with a new range of functions and add further value to Council decision-making and earthquake recovery in Christchurch's Wards.
17. Recognising that recovery is multi-dimensional but community-specific, as raised by EQC Professor Bruce Glavovic, and that a “one size fits all” approach is inappropriate, the Community Board Chairpersons aim to strengthen the network of Residents' Associations and groups within each ward to assist and empower community-centred recovery. Furthermore, it is recognised that there are many distinctive neighbourhoods in the ward with activities that need to be clustered around local communities. In other words recovery plans need to be localised to account for differential seismic damage, address distinctive needs and develop community centred solutions.

Conclusions

18. In conclusion the Community Board Chairpersons value the strengths of current processes that are working well besides Board and Council achievements. The Board Chairpersons recognise that future generations require us to urgently establish best practice process to ensure that community focused outcomes are achieved for the long term future of our community. Trust between elected members, Council staff and the community is an imperative. The implementation of the following recommendations will add further value to Council decision-making on behalf of and by Christchurch's communities. This is urgent given earthquake recovery matters and the ongoing nature of the current seismic activity. The recommendations will give life to Community Boards' delegations and advocacy roles at community level i.e. the grassroots.

Recommendations:

- (a) That Community Boards endorse the Plan proposed by the combined Community Board Chairs.
- (b) That the Council adopt the Community Boards' Plan 2012.

Christchurch Community Boards' Plan 2012

Note: These plans are proposed by the Community Board Chairpersons.

- (a) Urgently obtain local Service Centre facilities, including Community Board meeting rooms accessible to the community where none exist at present.

Explanation: Half of Christchurch is not covered by access to a Council Service Centre.

- (b) Community Boards be resourced to develop **Ward community wellbeing coordination in post earthquake recovery:** assessing local needs, implementing recovery from Ward Profiles, focussing on Ward facilities and strengthening social wellbeing in a community centred recovery. (Refer **Attachment 1**)
- (c) Empower the work of the Boards by providing Ward Community Board Earthquake Recovery Coordinators and increase responsibility to roles aligned to this initiative at Service Centres so Boards can be proactive to lead public participation in shaping the recovery in local areas.
- (d) The Ward Community Board Earthquake Recovery Coordinators could be partially funded through a partnership with CERA.
- (e) The emphasis of staff at service centre level should be on effective implementation of locally centred decision making reflecting s52 of the Local Government Act.

CHAIRPERSON