

## 7. 'CHARACTER' HOUSING MAINTENANCE GRANTS POLICY

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager Strategic Development
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Programme Manager Liveable City
<b>Author:</b>	Neil Carrie, DDI 941-8643

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to consider options and make recommendations on a policy and guidelines for the application of a 'Character' Housing Maintenance Grant Programme.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Council resolved in March 2004 to provide grants funding towards the external maintenance of older character houses to assist in their retention and continuing contribution to the residential amenity and identity of their local areas. There was concern that these houses, particularly the larger, timber homes with expressive architectural styles, were being lost and replaced by new, higher density residential units with a consequential loss of the quality of local streetscapes, neighbourhoods, open spaces, settings and trees. The grants programme proposed recognised that there was a financial burden associated with the retention of these older, larger character houses which was contributing to their continuing loss throughout the city.
3. The Council resolved to develop a policy and grant conditions for the assessment and application of the proposed grants programme.

### FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. Budget provision has been made of \$75,000 per annum from the 2005/06 financial year for five years, with a maximum grant of \$5,000 per house. The resolution provided for an agreement not to demolish for a period of at least five years, the agreement to continue with the property title. This could be provided within the form of an encumbrance registered against the property title. However, the use of a conservation covenant under s77 of the Reserves Act has a significant administrative and legal overhead which could be inconsistent and onerous with regard to the grant limits proposed by the Council resolution.
5. The policy and grant provisions are to be reviewed after a period of five years from the date of the adoption of the policy.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Adopt the guidelines, conditions and application and administration procedures relating to the proposed character housing grants operational policy as set out in Appendix A.
- (b) That a conservation covenant under s66 of the Reserves Act be a condition of a grant subject to the grantee's agreement. Otherwise, that a written confirmation be provided by the grantee to the Council that the grantee will not apply for a consent for demolition for a period of 10 years (NB Council resolution was 'not less than 5 years') from the time of the grant payment.
- (c) That unexpended grant monies for 2005/06 be carried forward to the 06/07 financial year

## BACKGROUND ON CHARACTER HOUSING MAINTENANCE GRANTS POLICY

6. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee at its budget meeting on 9 February 2004 expressed concern at the loss of the character and identity of many Christchurch suburbs, through the demolition of older houses of particular distinction and the quality of settings which made a distinctive contribution to the streetscape of local areas. Funding of \$75,000 per annum was requested. This request was reported and agreed by the Annual Plan Subcommittee of 23 February 2004. The grants programme was approved by Council resolution at the LTCCP meeting of 18 March 2004.
7. The following recommendations were approved:
  - “1. That a policy be prepared for the assessment and application of grants for external maintenance to non-listed ‘character’ houses in residential Christchurch.
  2. That individual grants be provided at 10% of the actual maintenance cost or a maximum of \$5,000.
  3. That where a grant is provided and the property is regarded as being worthy of a heritage listing, that the agreement of the owner to listing be given as a condition of the grant.
  4. That where a grant is provided the owner to enter into an agreement not to demolish for a period of at least five years, the agreement to continue with the property title.
  5. That provision of \$75,000 per annum for five years be made for the purpose of implementing the ‘character’ house maintenance policy starting in 2005/06.
  6. That the policy and grant conditions be reassessed after a period of five years from the date of the adoption of the policy.”
8. There was no definition of what constituted a ‘character’ house, the scope of external maintenance or the means of implementing the grants programme in the Council resolutions. These have been addressed in the proposed operational policy (attached) which includes the preferred options addressed in the latter sections of this report, as well as the previous resolutions of the Council.

## OPTIONS

9. Two general issues need to be addressed in preparing a policy for the assessment and application of grants.
  - (a) The guidelines and assessment process
  - (b) The management of the grant process

### A) The selection guidelines and assessment process

The guidelines should provide the basis for the identification of character houses which make a particular contribution to the visual character and quality of the streetscape and local area. The assessment process would apply criteria to individual houses perceived by the local community to be of particular merit in their neighbourhood.

The selection guidelines of particular significance are likely to be age, intactness and distinctive architectural design, landmark prominence and belonging to a group of houses of similar appearance and street presence. The recognition of significant character houses is very much to do with local community understanding of their own sense of their ‘place’. The alternatives are that the heritage criteria should be applied in the same manner as for listed heritage items, or that only houses in areas already designated as Special Amenity Areas (SAMs) be considered. While there will be similarities generally with heritage criteria, guidelines for character houses would be applied for their community and streetscape contribution to local identity, rather than just for their heritage or geographical significance.

## B) The management of the grant process

If it is agreed that the identification of character houses is predominately from a community perspective, then the management and recommendations for grants should also be a community focussed responsibility. It would be reasonable in these circumstances for each area to be identified with a Community Board area.

An advisory group for each Community Board area could be constituted involving Board members, residents, Community Board staff and Strategy and Planning Group staff as appropriate. Applications could be sought from property owners, and a selection made by each advisory group with grant recommendations to the Strategy and Planning Group for review and final recommendations to each of the respective Boards. Heritage, urban design and neighbourhood planning staff would be provided by the Strategy and Planning Group to advise and assist the community advisory group and to administer the grant payments.

Details of the process could be advised to all Community Boards by the Strategy and Planning Group, such as information required with an application, the selection process and advice and final selections. This process should be reviewed after one or two years once the community advisory groups became more familiar with the selection process.

The alternative is for the Strategy and Planning Group to be solely responsible for the management of the programme, to provide a consistent standard for the assessment and selection process across the city.

## ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

### A) The Guidelines and Assessment Process

#### Preferred Option: The Guidelines reflect the external Character of the House

The guidelines for identifying character houses reflect the contribution that individual residential homes make to the identity of their local streetscape through their distinctive architectural, craftsmanship, landmark, group and historic qualities as individual houses or within consistent groups of representative houses as determined by the local community.

	<b>Benefits (current and future)</b>	<b>Costs (current and future)</b>
<b>Social</b>	Strengthens sense of community well-being by improving the identity of the local streetscape	
<b>Cultural</b>	Continuity of sense of place and community through reduction in loss of older housing	
<b>Environmental</b>	Improved amenity and character for local streetscapes through exterior housing improvements	
<b>Economic</b>	Sustainable maintenance of a broader city housing stock	Limitations on possible sites for new development
<b>Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:</b> Primary alignment with community outcome for Inclusive Communities which have a sense of belonging and identity and have opportunities to contribute to the city's well-being. Also contributes to a Liveable City and a Cultural and Fun City.		
<b>Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities:</b> Improves the Council's contribution to the community and neighbourhood identity and the amenity of local residential streetscapes as determined by the local community.		
<b>Effects on Maori:</b> N/A		

**Consistency with existing Council policies:**

Extends the scope of grants for residential amenity and identity while being consistent in general approach with current heritage grant policies

**Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:****Other relevant matters:**

The focus is on the retention of older character houses which make a contribution to the local streetscape and the identity of the residential area through their street presence as perceived by the local community

**A) The Guidelines and Assessment Process****ALTERNATIVE OPTION - The guidelines utilise the City Plan criteria of heritage significance**

The criteria for identifying character houses includes all heritage categories (historical, cultural, social, spiritual, architectural, landmark, group, technological, craftsmanship and archaeological qualities) where they are associated with the house as a whole rather than its street presence.

	<b>Benefits (current and future)</b>	<b>Costs (current and future)</b>
<b>Social</b>	Recognition of character house significance set at a high standard	Reduced scope for community participation
<b>Cultural</b>	Reinforces 'special' character houses which contribute across all criteria	Inclusion of criteria with intangible values reduces importance of the physical contribution to local community character and identity
<b>Environmental</b>		Limits numbers and locations of qualifying houses
<b>Economic</b>		Reduces potential for residential improvements across the whole city

**Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:**

Primary alignment with community outcome for Inclusive Communities. However, this approach is likely to restrict the inclusiveness by limiting the scope of the housing and the communities which might qualify for grant assistance

Also contributes to a Cultural City with the limitations addressed above

**Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities:**

Lesser commitment to a community perception of their residential identity and amenity if potential scope of community participation is restricted by the alignment with heritage standards.

**Effects on Maori:**

N/A

**Consistency with existing Council policies:**

Identification and assessment covering all heritage criteria creates a sub-set of the City Plan heritage inventory but without the emphasis on the retention of and contribution that a character house makes on the visual identity of the local streetscape and neighbourhood in relation to amenity, urban design and neighbourhood planning.

**Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:****Other relevant matters:**

The resolution of Council included a requirement that it applied only to non-listed 'character' houses

**(A) The Guidelines and Assessment Process**

**ALTERNATIVE OPTION – The Guidelines apply only to special areas of the city**

Character houses are identified by their inclusion in identified geographical areas of the city such as with Special Amenity Areas where a design and appearance rule applies.

	<b>Benefits (current and future)</b>	<b>Costs (current and future)</b>
<b>Social</b>	Reinforcing of the identity of individual communities which already have a high sense of community	Does not provide an opportunity for every community to participate in housing amenity improvements
<b>Cultural</b>	Greatest emphasis on areas with high degrees of intactness of character houses	Does not recognise the individual contribution that a house may make to the local neighbourhood outside SAMs
<b>Environmental</b>	Focus of grants programme to limited residential areas of Christchurch for most effect	
<b>Economic</b>		

**Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:**  
Primary alignment with community outcome for a Liveable City.  
Also contributes to a Cultural City

**Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities:** Loss of commitment to enhanced residential identity and amenity for a wide section of the community

**Effects on Maori:**

**Consistency with existing Council policies:**  
Recognises the importance associated with the Special Amenity Areas of the City Plan

**Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:**

**Other relevant matters:**  
Restricted application of funds to limited areas of the city which may already have an intact and recognisable character

**B) The Management of the Grant process**

**Preferred Option: The process is managed by Community Boards**

The implementation of the grant assessment process to be the responsibility of individual Community Boards with the assistance and guidance of the Strategy and Planning Group. Community Boards will receive an equal share of the \$75,000 fund for distribution which can be increased from the Board's discretionary funds to provide individual grants of not more than \$9,950, with no limits on the number of grants in any Community Board area.

	<b>Benefits (current and future)</b>	<b>Costs (current and future)</b>
<b>Social</b>	Community and Board's ownership of and contribution to the character housing grant programme	
<b>Cultural</b>	Contribute to an increased recognition within the community of the importance of a sense of place and local identity through the grants programme	
<b>Environmental</b>	Potential for improved streetscapes, and individual houses in all local areas	
<b>Economic</b>	Greater flexibility and leverage with the potential for additional funding from Community Boards to achieve community outcomes	Potential use of Community Board discretionary funds

**Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:**

Primary alignment with community outcome for a Well Governed City where people participate in decision making in their own community area.  
Also contributes to an Inclusive City and a Liveable City

**Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities:**

Increased opportunity for community participation and local input through the involvement of the Community Boards and members of the local community in the assessment and decisions on the grants programme.

**Effects on Maori:**

N/A

**Consistency with existing Council policies:**

Delegation of community outcomes and responsibilities to Community Boards and local communities. Advisory and grant management role in the process from the Planning and Strategy Group

**Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:**

The Community Engagement Team Leader is very supportive of the community focus and Community Board involvement in the programme

**Other relevant matters:**

The outcome anticipated of the retention and enhancement of character houses would be limited by a restriction of individual grants to a maximum of \$5,000. This option provides an opportunity for an increase in grant levels where these are supported by Community Boards from their own discretionary funds.

**B) The Management of the Grant process**

**Alternative Option: The process is managed by the Strategy and Planning Unit**

The management of the Character Housing grant process to be the responsibility of the Strategy and Group.

	<b>Benefits (current and future)</b>	<b>Costs (current and future)</b>
<b>Social</b>	Application of policy and grants seen as being equitable across all Christchurch communities	Loss of community self determination in process
<b>Cultural</b>	Consistency in selection of character housing grants city-wide	Loss of local input and perception of the special qualities of a community's neighbourhood
<b>Environmental</b>	Character house selection for grants can be linked to other neighbourhood strategies	
<b>Economic</b>		Less opportunity for leveraging with Community Board funds
<p><b>Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:</b> Primary alignment with community outcome: Liveable City Also contributes to a Cultural City.</p> <p><b>Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities:</b> Loss of community determination and ownership of the character grants programme and neighbourhood outcomes</p> <p><b>Effects on Maori:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Consistency with existing Council policies:</b> Grant management aligned with the responsibilities of the Planning and Strategy Group.</p> <p><b>Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:</b></p> <p><b>Other relevant matters:</b> The Planning and Strategy Group would be required to initiate applications, assess submissions, provide grant approvals, grant payments and provide monitoring of a programme for character houses which are not listed heritage buildings.</p>		