

10. NIGHT SHELTER AND SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR WOMEN SERVICE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Community Services, DDI 941-8534
Officer responsible:	Community Support Manager
Author:	Kevin Bennett, Manager City Housing

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval of a proposed approach to the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service in Christchurch.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. At its meeting on 2 March 2006 the Council adopted a report recommending that the Council:
 - (a) Agree to the provision of \$35,000 plus GST financial assistance, to the YWCA to enable it to continue to operate the Emergency Accommodation for Women service until 30 June 2006;
 - (b) Note that the need for such a service will be researched and analysed with a further report being prepared for the Council's consideration before the end of June 2006; and
 - (c) Request the Creating Strong Communities Portfolio Group to take an overview of the review process.
3. The requirement for the financial assistance and research arose as a result of the YWCA informing the Council in January 2006 that it could no longer fund the service and would close it as soon as possible. The YWCA also advised that it wished to negotiate to withdraw from the lease of the Hereford Street facility, owned by the Council, and return the facility to the Council from as early a date as possible.
4. The YWCA agreed to continue operating the service until 30 June 2006 if assistance was made available towards meeting the cost of the service. The assistance required was \$35,000, plus GST. In accordance with the Council's decision of 2 March 2006 the required assistance has been provided.
5. An external consultant, Dr Stephanie Kelly, was engaged to undertake the research and has submitted her report. In addition a current market valuation of the facility was obtained and a condition assessment conducted.
6. The research has concluded that there continues to be a need for the Women's Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation service currently provided by the YWCA although the YWCA may not be the best equipped provider as it considers this particular service to be outside of, and draining resources from, its core services.
7. A range of options has been considered and it is considered the most appropriate option is for the Council to seek registrations of interest for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

8. The financial cost to the Council of implementing this proposal is minimal as it is basically restricted to the cost of advertising and staff time.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council grant approval for registrations of interest to be called for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.

BACKGROUND ON WOMEN'S NIGHT SHELTER AND SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICE(YWCA)

9. The YWCA Christchurch Inc has been operating the Women's Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service for 20 years. The service originally operated from a hostel on the corner of Madras and Lichfield streets and subsequently relocated to various suburban residential properties, including a period at Kingslea, before moving to its present location at 281-285 Hereford Street nine years ago.
10. The facility at 281-285 Hereford Street was purchased by the Council, funded through the Housing Development Fund, for use by the YWCA for special housing purposes. The cost of purchase was \$770,000 plus GST; in addition extensive work was required to bring the facility up to the required standard and this was funded jointly between the YWCA and the Council. The facility comprises a former motel complex which was reconfigured to suit the needs of the Women's Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation service. It now comprises:
 - One x five bedroom unit with two kitchens, two bathrooms living area and office
 - Two x three bedroom units with kitchen, bathroom and living area
 - One x three bedroom unit with two kitchens two bathrooms and living area.
 - Two x two bedroom units with two kitchen/dining areas, and two bathrooms – capable of being used as two x one bedroom units.
 - One unit containing main office, kitchen, lounge, bedroom, bathroom, second office – capable of being converted back into a two bedroom unit.
11. The facility has been valued in May 2006 by DTZ New Zealand Limited. The assessed market value is \$1,100,000 subject to the existing lease to the YWCA being surrendered. While the lease to the YWCA continues the market value is assessed at \$450,000 plus GST.
12. A property condition assessment was conducted in May 2006. This assessment concluded that the interior of the property is in average condition while the exterior is in good/moderate condition. The inspection identified work which needs to be addressed promptly to protect the buildings from deterioration in the short term; this work is estimated at \$32,000 plus GST.
13. In accordance with the terms of the lease, the lessee (YWCA) is responsible for funding interior and exterior maintenance.
14. The lease agreement commenced on 18 February 1998 for an initial term of nine years with three further terms, each of six years, available. The initial term expires in February 2007 at which time the YWCA has the option to invoke the first further term of six years.
15. The current rental is \$27,858 pa plus GST. Rent reviews occur three yearly indexed to the CPI. The initial rental equated to a 2.5% return on investment.
16. The market rent which could be attracted if the facility was converted into an 11 unit residential complex is assessed at \$98,280 pa.
17. The service provided by the YWCA from the Hereford Street facility is providing emergency, night shelter and supported accommodation for women with low incomes both on their own and with children. This service is the only one operating in the inner city that is not according to mental health, drug and alcohol or domestic abuse criteria. Over its lifetime the service has evolved into a supportive and developmental service for women on their own, and with families, who are on low incomes and seeking active intervention or support to make changes to their acute/chronic circumstances. Similar services are available through the Home and Family Society and Housing for Women Trust but these are based in the suburbs, outside the four avenues. The YWCA, and other providers consulted are of the view that it is important an ongoing service of the type provided by the YWCA is situated within the four avenues due to easy access to services that such an address offers, especially for women in transition who may not have access to a vehicle and the associated costs.
18. During the consultation process with Dr Kelly, the YWCA expressed concern at the need for improved governance processes around any partnership which may continue between the YWCA and the Council rather than the simple facility leasing arrangement which currently exists.

19. The provision of accommodation of the nature provided for women by the YWCA is one of a number of scenarios demanding attention. Consequently, in addressing this particular issue the Council needs to be quite clear about its role in facilitating/providing services of this nature. The Council's current housing policy does not provide a mandate to engage in this activity although the Council's social wellbeing policy does impact. The Council's housing vision statement is:

- "To contribute to the community's social well-being by ensuring safe, accessible and affordable housing is available to people on low incomes including elderly persons, and people with disabilities."
- "That Christchurch is a city in which the elderly can express their full potential and make a valuable contribution to the life of their communities."

Although the facilitation/provision of this particular service is not consistent with the Council's housing vision statement it may be deemed appropriate for some form of resourcing to be available as a community development initiative.

20. Housing New Zealand Corporation's mission is to "provide access to decent homes, helping New Zealanders manage their own circumstances and contribute to community life". Although HNZC has identified a growing national trend of people in need of emergency and short term accommodation its prime focus is the provision of rental accommodation in accordance with its established criteria. Currently, HNZC is researching the need for emergency accommodation nationally.

21. At the time of writing this report the YWCA had orally advised that it will continue to operate the Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service until the end of February 2007. It is understood the YWCA will be informing the Mayor of this decision formally.

22. There are arrangements between the Council and other social housing providers which are commonly referred to as partnerships. However, in all but one instance (Beckenham Community Housing Trust – Lancewood Courts) these are simply facility lease arrangements at a low rate of return on investment (discounted rental). The term 'partnership' implies a greater involvement in the provision of the service with appropriate governance and monitoring procedures established.

23. In accordance with research it is evident that a need does exist for a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service in the central city (within the four avenues) consistent with the service currently provided by the YWCA from the Hereford Street facility. The prime issue around the provision of the service for the Council to address is the extent of the Council's involvement.

OPTIONS

24. A number of options are available but it is important that any decision made is consistent with the Council's Social Housing Strategy currently being developed; these options include:

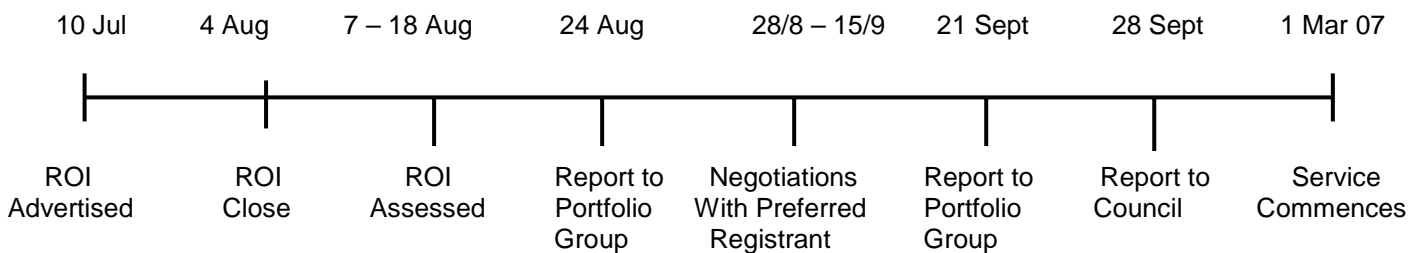
- (i) The Council withdraw from the current arrangement with the YWCA as from February 2007.
- (ii) The Council negotiate an appropriate 'partnership' with the YWCA for the continued provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.
- (iii) The Council identify and negotiate a 'partnership' with potential alternative providers for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.
- (iv) The Council call for registrations of interest for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.

25. Options (ii), (iii), and (iv) above will require the development of specific criteria around the responsibilities of the parties concerned, including the Council. These responsibilities include the provision of an appropriate facility from which to operate, funding of the service, entry criteria, governance, and monitoring. This does not imply however that the Council has any role other than facilitating the service establishment.

PREFERRED OPTION

- 26. The preferred option is option (iv), ie the Council call for registrations of interest for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service. This option enables the Council to proactively promote the provision of this service without committing itself to financially supporting it. This option has the additional advantage of not establishing a precedent in relation to competing demands for financial assistance from other equally deserving community groups involved in accommodating other sectors of the community.

- 27. Because of the YWCA’s expressed interest in continuing to operate the current service under existing conditions until February 2007 only and the impact on the Council’s Social Housing Strategy currently being developed, it is appropriate that registrations of interest be advertised at an early date. However, to allow for the formulation of concise criteria it is unlikely advertising could proceed until mid July 2006. Because of the nature of the proposal, sufficient time should be allowed to enable interested parties to consult and prepare highly developed registrations. In view of this a minimum of four weeks should be allocated to registrations being received. A preliminary time line is set out below:



Assessment of Options

28. The Preferred Option (Option (iv)): **The Council call for Registration of Interest for the provision of a Night Shelter and Supported Accommodation for Women service.**

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	Demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring the service continues without requiring the Council to be the service provider.	Potential anxiety to service users who may perceive a discontinuation of the service. This can be mitigated through appropriate communication and news media releases.
Cultural	Facilitates the continued provision of an equitable inner city service to vulnerable women and their families.	None identified.
Environmental	Those in need continue to have access to an appropriate service.	The service may relocate which may have the potential to cause some short term disruption to the service provision.
Economic	Service is provided at minimal cost to the ratepayer.	Initial costs would be minimal (basically advertising and staff time). Operating cost to the Council will be identified post receipt of Registrations of Interest.
<p>Extent to which community outcomes are achieved: Primary alignment with community outcome 'A Safe City' Also contributes to 'A City of Inclusive and Diverse Communities'.</p> <p>Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities: A positive demonstration of the Council supporting a community service while at the same time facilitating a sustainable service provision.</p> <p>Effects on Maori: The service to be available to women from all cultures, including Maori.</p> <p>Consistency with existing Council policies: Consistent with the Council's Social Wellbeing Policy.</p> <p>Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest: Research has indicated support from appropriate agencies for the continuation of the service. It is anticipated that Registrations of Interest will be received from other providers of social accommodation services in addition to interest from others.</p> <p>Other relevant matters:</p>		

29. **Maintain The Status Quo:** This is not an option in view of the current service provider's unwillingness to continue with the current arrangement beyond February 2007.