



CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

THURSDAY 8 JUNE 2006

AT 9.30AM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES

Council: The Mayor, Garry Moore (Chairperson).
Councillors Helen Broughton, Sally Buck, Graham Condon, Barry Corbett, David Cox, Anna Crighton,
Carole Evans, Pat Harrow, Bob Parker, Bob Shearing, Gail Sheriff, Sue Wells and Norm Withers.

ITEM NO	DESCRIPTION
1.	APOLOGIES
2.	CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - COUNCIL MEETING OF 25.5.2006
3.	DEPUTATIONS BY APPOINTMENT
4.	PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
5.	CORRESPONDENCE
6.	CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DRAFT LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN 2006-16
7.	RECONFIRMATION OF COMMUNITY LOAN APPROVAL: SHIRLEY SPORTS CLUB
8.	OPTIONS FOR BILLING ECAN RATES
9.	NOTICES OF MOTION
10.	QUESTIONS
11.	RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

8. 6. 2006

- 2 -

- 1. APOLOGIES**

- 2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - COUNCIL MEETING OF 25.5.2006**
Attached.

- 3. DEPUTATIONS BY APPOINTMENT**

- 4. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS**

- 5. CORRESPONDENCE**

6. CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DRAFT LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN 2006-16

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Strategy and Planning, DDI 941-8177
Officer responsible:	Strategy and Planning Manager
Author:	Heike Lulay, Assistant Policy Analyst

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to request the Council to approve the Christchurch City Council's submission on the Selwyn District Council's draft Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-16 (LTCCP). A copy of the submission is attached.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Council's Strategy and Planning Unit co-ordinated an overall submission on the Selwyn District Council's draft LTCCP 2006-16 on behalf of the Christchurch City Council. A number of individuals throughout the organisation were given various sections of the Selwyn District Council's LTCCP to comment on, and all responses were then incorporated into one overall submission. The Selwyn District Council's submission period ends 12 June.
3. The Christchurch City Council's submission on the Selwyn District Council's draft LTCCP addresses various aspects of the document, the majority of which centre around Selwyn District Council's groups of activities. Comments address Projects; Democracy; Community Services; Transportation; Waste Water Services and Water Services; and the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (*see attached CCC's submission on Selwyn District Council's draft LTCCP for detailed comments*).

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. There are no financial or legal considerations in relation to this matter.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve the Christchurch City Council's submission on Selwyn District Council's draft Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-16.

7. RECONFIRMATION OF COMMUNITY LOAN APPROVAL: SHIRLEY SPORTS CLUB

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Community Services, DDI 941-8534
Officer responsible:	Recreation and Sport Manager
Author:	Kevin Collier, Sport and Funding Adviser

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to re-confirm the approval of a community loan to the Shirley Sports Club.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. At the last meeting of the Metropolitan Funding Subcommittee on 29 July 2005, the Subcommittee approved a late application for a community loan from the Shirley Sports Club for \$50,000 pending provision of adequate documentation of security for the loan.
3. Unfortunately, through an administrative oversight this resolution was not actually recorded in the official meeting minutes and as such needs to be reconfirmed by the Council in order to be able to pay the loan out.
4. Attached for reference as Appendix 1 is the original summary of the loan application as presented to the Subcommittee in July last year.
5. Immediately after the July meeting officers worked with the club to confirm security details as per the request of the Metropolitan Funding Subcommittee and Councillors were informed of the details of the agreement by memo on 19 December 2005, as shown in Appendix 2.
6. The matter has only recently come to the officer's attention as the club has only recently been in a position to finally uplift the loan. This triggered a checking process which highlighted the oversight.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve a Community Loan of \$50,000 to the Shirley Sports Club Incorporated.

8. OPTIONS FOR BILLING ECAN RATES

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Corporate Services, DDI 941-8540
Officer responsible:	Funds & Financial Policy Manager
Author:	Geoff Barnes

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This purpose of this report is to advise the Council of options for billing the Canterbury Regional Council's (referred to as Environment Canterbury (ECan)) rates, a service the City Council conducts under contract as ECan's agent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Council has requested a report on the options for the Christchurch City Council (CCC) in acting as the rating agent for the Canterbury Regional Council, ECan. The Council's objectives for investigating options around the rating function include a desire to draw a clearer distinction between the roles of the two Councils in the public viewpoint. There is evidence that the public is confused regarding the respective roles of the two Councils and the rating decisions by one authority can have an impact on the public's perceptions of both. Separation of the rating invoicing functions may be a way to attach greater accountability and transparency to the respective authorities' functions.

3. There are two distinct rating services performed by the CCC for ECan:

First, the CCC supplies ECan with a copy of the District Valuation Roll (DVR), as required under statute. ECan shares in the costs of preparing the DVR, based on its proportion of rates set; currently 16% or \$155,000 pa. This service by the CCC will continue under any billing structure option.

Secondly, the CCC provides a billing agency service for ECan for which it charges 2% commission, or \$675,000 revenue (05/06). It is this service which is optional. This service is made up of:

- Maintenance of the Rate Information Database, including the ECan rates on each rating unit, name of ratepayer, address, property details and rates assessed;
- Processing of the rate billing transactions, including:
 - Issuing its rate assessment, with a separate page for ECan,
 - Combined rates invoice/ statement, together with the City Council, quarterly;
 - Cash processing including receipting, bank direct credits of various types, and direct debiting;
 - Arrears collection;
 - Processing remissions, enquiries, transfers of property transactions; and
 - Accounting for ECan's share of the rates and distribution to ECan monthly.

Attached as Appendix A is a sample of an Instalment One rates assessment notice containing the current year's combined assessment and combined invoice/statement. The content of the form is, to a large extent, prescribed by statute.

4. In terms of meeting the Council's objectives for increased public understanding of the distinction between the two authorities, the options can be assessed as follows:
 - (1) Continue to act as the agent for ECan, but publish a separate ECan assessment and ECan invoice/statement for each instalment to highlight the distinct nature of the two Councils, mailed under a separate cover; or
 - (2) Decline to act for ECan in billing for its rates.
5. The first option offers a comprehensive separation, by providing a separate assessment and a separate invoice/statement for each Council. This would assist in ensuring that the distinction between each Council's role and function is clearly defined and reinforced at the point of transaction. It also ensures that the cost structures for each Council are clearly separated. This approach ensures that the separate accountabilities are reinforced at multiple transaction points.

8 Cont'd

6. The first option will require significant updating of the computer resources as it requires a full duplication and separation of the rate transactions and debtors' records. This option is not able to be achieved in the short term, and will require additional staff to manage the process. It would also require significant modification to older software. This is not without risk. It will also add complexity to the transactions process and an increased risk of error. The change would best be implemented as part of the rates software replacement project, currently underway and scheduled for completion in 2008.
7. The second option means the City Council and ECan achieve complete separation. In this case the City Council limits its role to providing a DVR for ECan to undertake its own billing or have an agent do this. The Council will lose the commission revenue, and our rates would increase by \$675,000 pa (05/06).
8. It is recommended that the Council give immediate notice to ECan of its intention to change as at 30 June 2007 and commence discussions with ECan regarding the separation of billing, as per Option 2. This is the best method of achieving the Council's desire for a clearer distinction between the two Councils while still leaving ECan sufficient time to negotiate an alternative. This could include consulting with other local authorities or handling the process itself. As an interim step, it is suggested that a notice be inserted in the assessment detailing the change and advising ratepayers that this is the last year CCC will process ECan's rates under the existing system.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. There is no current written contract with ECan other than an agreement to charge 2% commission. ECan declined to accept the last contract proposed and the services are running on under existing conditions. A reasonable notice period for cancelling the agency is expected. Any continued service for ECan should be under contract, and if not, then in the short term, by an exchange of letters.
10. The current rating method of combined billing is cost effective with minimum impact on the ratepayers and their agents. Each alternate option has adverse financial impacts for the Council and hence increases the rates cost to ratepayers.
11. The additional costs for the City Council for each option are estimated below:

Option 1: - estimated costs only – subject to process definition and costing

Software and process development to be determined as part of Laser project

Operational costs - system costs	\$150,000 per annum
Operational costs - extra staff resources	\$300,000
Billing costs, mail out	\$280,000
Cash collection and bank fees	\$141,000
Total	\$871,000 per annum

The City Council would renegotiate the commission to reflect the additional costs.

Option 2:

Loss of commission to CCC 05/06 revenue level, effective from 07/08	\$675,000 per annum
--	---------------------

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (a) The Council confirm it will continue to act as the agent for ECan's rates for the current year, under the current structure, for a further 12 months.
- (b) The Council give immediate notice to ECan that it will no longer act as the agent for ECan from 1 July 2007.
- (c) Notice be given to the public with instalment one advising the public of the intention to separate the billing and the reasons for doing so.

8 Cont'd

BACKGROUND ON THE COUNCIL ACTING AS THE RATING AGENT FOR ECan

12. The CCC is the rate billing agent for ECan in Christchurch. Generally, each territorial council undertakes this role in its area within the Canterbury region.
13. There are two distinct rating services performed by CCC for ECan.
14. Firstly, CCC supplies ECan with a copy of the District Valuation Roll (DVR). This is an obligatory function under Sections 7 and 43 of the Rating Valuations Act 1998. The DVR is the basis for rating for Councils. It lists all the current rateable property in the city, the ratepayers and property attributes, and is maintained by the City Council's Valuation Service Provider and Council staff under statute and the Valuer General's direction. Only one DVR is maintained in each district.
15. ECan shares in the costs of the DVR, based on its proportion of rates set, currently 16% or \$155,000 pa. The cost allocation is under statute. This service will continue under any billing structure option.
16. Secondly, CCC provides a billing agency service for ECan for which it charges commission. This is the primary focus of this report and the options described. This service is provided under contract between CCC and ECan, and as such either party may vary the terms of the service or even choose not to continue the contract, with reasonable notice. The status quo (the current service) is cost effective, generates commission income for the Council and allows it to administer rate policies on behalf of ECan.
17. The Council has asked for options of service delivery to maximise the community understanding of the separate roles of the two Councils and the rates payable. The services provided for ECan are identical to those necessary for the Council to complete its rating processes. There are very few extra tasks.
18. The data for rating for both councils are merged into one database within the CCC's rates processing system and once the rate assessment for each council is issued to the ratepayer, for all practical purposes the rates are collected as a single whole. An analysis of the rates due for any ratepayer can be made to separate the CCC portion and the ECan portion, but the transactions lie within a single debtor account. This separation is only formally made at year end as part of the balancing and reconciliation process, and is not requested at ratepayer level.
19. The focus for ratepayers has been on the amount of rates assessed for each Council.
20. The current billing process is made up of the following components:
 - Uploading and integration of the DVR within the rating database.
 - Maintenance of the Rate Information Database, including:
 - Recording ECan rates, on each rating unit in the city. This record is open for public inspection.
 - Loading rate decimals into the system, both draft and final.
 - Processing rate billing transactions, including:
 - Issuing ECan's rate assessment, published on a separate page from the CCC rate assessment, and designated by Council headings and colour;
 - Combining the ECan rates charged, together with the CCC rates, in the single quarterly rates invoice/ statement issued to each ratepayer;
 - Rates payment processing including cash receipting, bank direct credits of various types, and direct debiting;
 - Arrears collection.
 - Processing remissions, enquiries, transfers of property transactions.
 - Accounting for ECan's share of the rates and distributing to ECan monthly.
21. The CCC fee to ECan for the billing service is 2% commission on ECan rates collected and this provides \$675,000 (net of GST 2005/06) revenue for the Council. The commission is automatically adjusted each year as the quantum of ECan's rates is increased.
22. The current process is the simplest and most cost-effective rates collection process, but does not meet the City Council's desire for a clear separation of accountability between the Councils. Hence the recommendation to change the services provided.

8 Cont'd

Options for service delivery – processing issues

23. The options outlined each present the Council with degrees of separation and clarity of communication with the community. Option one requires time and resources for the Council to separate the billing functions. Option two would require sufficient notice to ECan to allow time for it to make alternative arrangements.

If change in the service or contract was contemplated, then the options for change are:

- (1) publish a separate assessment and invoice/statement for ECan to highlight the distinct nature of the two Councils, in a separate envelope to the ratepayer, or
 - (2) decline to act for ECan in billing for its rates.
24. Option (1) requires a separation of the rates debtors' ledger in addition to the separate issue of a rates assessment for ECan. There would need to be separate identification of:
- The ECan Rate Information Database within the CCC's data set; and
 - The ECan rate transactions and debtors' records, including balances outstanding, distinct from the rate transactions applicable to CCC balances.
25. Depending on the computer solution chosen, this effectively means all rate transactions and volume of enquiries will be duplicated.
26. This separation will require significant restructuring of the computer system process and require additional staff resources to operate it.
27. The practical impact of this option on the rates processes and systems will require careful consideration, together with software and process change, at a time when the CCC rates software is due for replacement. The City Council has been careful not to overload the system as it is at the end of its useful life and is no longer supported by the supplier. The change should only be introduced as part of the system change scheduled for 2008.
28. Cost recovery from ECan for the additional work will be by negotiation between CCC and ECan.
29. Option (2) means the City Council limits its role to providing a DVR for ECan to undertake its own billing or have another agent do this. CCC would no longer receive the commission revenue therefore there would be an increase in CCC rates of \$675,000 (05/06).
30. It will take time for ECan to establish alternative arrangements. A notice period of at least six months is reasonable.
31. Option (2) presents an additional complication for processing rates rebates, (noting the increase to an estimated 20,000 applications) in that whilst CCC is responsible for the rebate processing, it must include ECan rates. There may be practical difficulties and delays in processing.
32. The costs for each option are outlined, as much as they can be estimated at this point, under the heading Financial Considerations.

In this option the Council will be paid for the DVR share, say \$155,000 pa only.

Conclusion

33. The objectives of separation for the CCC as outlined in the opening comments cannot be fulfilled under the current billing arrangements.
34. Full separate billing under an agency agreement cannot be delivered in the short term and a delay of 12 months is recommended. The separation can come from CCC acting for ECan and separately billing, or by declining to act.
35. Declining to act for ECan will result in a loss of revenue for the City Council of \$675,000 (2005/06).

8. 6. 2006

- 9 -

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

10. QUESTIONS

11. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

Attached.