

6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To recommend a Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan (Appendix 1) in preparation for consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Work has been under way during 2006 to develop a Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan.
3. Despite being only one among many stakeholders in community development in Christchurch, the Council is in a unique position for four reasons:
 - It is responsible under the Local Government Act 2002 for promoting the long-term social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula.
 - It has a mandate under the Local Government Act 2002 to facilitate collaborative action to address community issues.
 - It is able to focus on building community strength, connectedness and resourcefulness, not just on the provision of social services to individuals.
 - It can contribute in a range of ways through its own activities to building stronger communities more generally, and to community development in particular.
4. The Council is currently valued for the facilitation, advice and networking role it plays at both metropolitan and local levels, and for its ability to respond flexibly-with funding as well as other forms of support-to community needs and issues. The breadth of the Council's current work, however, diffuses its resources and makes it difficult to focus on addressing key community issues in an integrated, whole-of-organisation way. The Council therefore needs to define its own role and priorities more clearly if it is to respond effectively to the expectations of councils in the Local Government Act 2002, and make the most difference for its community. The Draft Community Development Strategy provides the strategic framework for the Council's future work in this area.
5. The Draft Community Development Strategy signals that the Council's community development work will continue to:
 - operate at local, neighbourhood and metropolitan levels
 - encourage and enable communities to participate in Council decision making processes
 - ensure communities have access to appropriate community facilities and appropriate funding scheme
 - be one of the ways the Council contributes to Strong Communities
6. The Draft Community Development Strategy signals that the Council's community development work will change in the following ways:
 - it will be more goal-focused and output orientated, with work falling outside the goal areas no longer being a priority.
 - there will be greater emphasis on collaboration and working in partnership.
 - more effort will go in to an evidence based approach, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

7. The Community Group Grants Review in the draft document reduces the current nine grant schemes to five, as well as utilising the same funding schemes at both council and community board level. This will make the Council's grants to community organisations easier for organisations to understand and less complex. The approach recommended also enables multi-year funding arrangements where this is appropriate and clearly considers the funding for major organisations/institutions within the city in one scheme that is separated from the funding for other types of groups/projects. The proposed approach enables improved alignment between the Council's funding and its Strategic Directions and the Goals of the Draft Community Development Strategy.
8. The Community Facilities Plan in the draft document proposes a more structured and considered approach for the future to enable the Council to move away from its current provision of facilities based on a range of disconnected historical decisions. The approach proposed includes a focus of the Council's direct provision at a suburban level with the aim to develop a network of multi-functional facilities equitably distributed across the city over a number of years. At a more neighbourhood level it is proposed that the Council focus more on funding and support to facilitate access to facilities provided by others.
9. Staff have been through a process of analysing reports and research, engaging with stakeholder groups (through an external reference group) and seeking the views of both community boards and Council (through the Strong Communities Portfolio Group and seminars).
10. The general contents and direction of the Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan were discussed with councillors at a seminar on 10 October 2006.
11. This report presents a Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan for approval by the Council.
12. To complete the Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan now requires a period of consultation, a consideration of the feedback received through this process and subsequently appropriate redrafting before the Council adopts the final strategy. The final strategy is due to be completed in March 2007.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

13. The Draft Community Development Strategy, Community Group Grants Review and Community Facilities Plan have been developed in accordance with the decision making and other provisions of the Local Government Act 2002. A period of broad consultation should now be undertaken. The Council works with a wide range of community and voluntary organisations, as well as government departments in the community development area and it is important that these organisations are able to participate fully in the development of these pieces of work. This is particularly the case given that one of the goals identified in the Draft Community Development Strategy is around increasing participation in local decision making.
14. The Council has indicated its future funding for community development, community group grants and community facilities in its 2006-16 LTCCP. These pieces of work have been developed with the commitments made in the LTCCP in mind and do not require additional resources in order to implement them.
15. As part of the LTCCP savings were identified in the in the area of community facilities. Specifically, the LTCCP asks for savings of \$158,800 in 2007/08, and \$397,000 per annum in subsequent years (out of a total of approximately \$2.0M available for expenditure on community halls in 2005/06).
16. The Draft Community Facilities Plan does not identify specifically how these savings will be made but does provide a framework within which the decisions necessary to make the savings can be made in the future and includes a draft set of criteria for investing in and divesting from community facilities.

17. Upon the adoption of the Community Development Strategy, Community Group Grants Review and Community Facilities Plan by Council, community facilities will be evaluated to determine how they are meeting the Council's objectives. As part of the development of the Community Facilities - Implementation Plan, a range of initiatives will be implemented to ensure savings are achieved. Public consultation on the draft Community Facilities – Implementation Plan will take place in 2007.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council approve the Draft Community Development Strategy, Community Group Grants Review and Community Facilities Plan (Appendix 1) for consultation.

BACKGROUND ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

18. Three inter-connected staff teams have been working on the Draft Community Development Strategy, Community Group Grants Review and Community Facilities Plan since early 2006. These pieces of work are closely related with the Community Development Strategy providing the framework for the more detailed planning of grants and community facilities.
19. An external reference group comprising people from community and voluntary organisations and relevant government agencies has been used to provide independent advice on the content and direction of this work. This group has met monthly throughout the process and staff have carefully considered the range of views expressed by members of this group.
20. Joint Community Board seminars were on 29 June 2006 and 28 September 2006 to enable the views of community board members to be considered in the development of the draft Community Development Strategy, Community Group Grants Review and Community Facilities Plan.
21. The Council through its Strong Communities portfolio group and through Council seminars has provided input to this work at regular intervals. The Strong Communities Portfolio Group considered information and provided input on; 2 March 2006, 22 June 2006, 24 August 2006 and 28 September 2006. In addition Council seminars were held on 25 July 2006 and 10 October 2006.
22. Key comments from Councillors at the 10 October seminar included:

Draft Community Development Strategy

- The need to acknowledge the contribution of parks and greenspace to strengthening communities
- Where Council gets involved it needs to be sustainable
- Some service providers need to amalgamate to be more efficient
- There needs to be a balance between community development activities across the city and at a local level
- Council contribution should not just be about the provision of grant money but also support in other ways.

Draft Community Group Grants Review

- Flexibility needs to be retained in the grants system
- Some concerns about the distribution of the grants budget between the different proposed schemes
- The possibility that some groups that have consistently received funding for many years could become line items.
- Issues around how the Banks Peninsula community boards fitted into the proposed structure

Draft Community Facilities Plan

- Concerns over changing the Council's approach to ownership of community cottages and the rationalisation of some community facilities
- The need to examine why some facilities are being poorly used
- Access to school halls need to be investigated as the Council has contributed to a number of them over the years
- There is a need to ensure that community groups can cope with these changes as they are implemented.

23. Community development is both a process and an outcome. Community development is a *process* through which a community identifies its aspirations and goals, and works collectively to achieve them. The process uses the community's own skills and strengths where possible, but may draw on external resources. These resources might include planning assistance, governance advice, or help building relationships with key partners, networking, or identifying sources of funding, for example. The Council cannot by definition carry out the community development process but can be an important supporter of it.
24. Community development is also an *outcome*, where as a result of people's shared vision and effort, communities become better places to live. Clearly the Council has a mandate under the Local Government Act 2002 to contribute to achieving this outcome.
25. Community development builds strong communities. It strengthens bonds within a community, and also links it to a wider community so helping to increase skills, to build mutual understanding and trust, and to broaden the resources on which a community can draw to identify its own assets and address local issues. Communities that have both strong internal bonds, and healthy links to other communities, are strong communities: they make good use of their members' skills, and are more able to attract and generate the resources they need. As a result, they are more resourceful and adaptable, and better able both to care for those who need support and to take part in decisions that affect them.
26. In terms of grants, the Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan signals a shift from the current nine grant schemes (covered by the grants review) to five grant schemes:
 - Strengthening Communities Fund (operating at metropolitan and community board levels)
 - Small Projects Fund (operating at metropolitan and community board levels)
 - Discretionary Response Fund (operating at metropolitan and community board levels)
 - Principal Organisations Fund (operating at metropolitan level)
 - Community Loans Scheme (operating at metropolitan level)
27. The primary rationale for the five proposed schemes is the need to work towards a clearer, more structured and coherent alignment for the community grant funding schemes and the Council's strategic directions, strategies and priority areas of work in responding to, and delivering on the agreed outcomes approved in the 2006-2016 LTCCP.
28. The draft document identifies that community facilities are not simply buildings, they are focal points for activities to occur that contribute to social wellbeing. Community facilities allow activities to take place which fulfil a wide variety of social, educational and recreational needs. They provide places for people to meet, play and learn. It is through these activities that community facilities play a critical role in strengthening communities and meeting the objectives of the Community Development Strategy. A wide range of facilities including libraries and recreation centres play these roles, however the Community Development Strategy focuses specifically on community centres, community halls and community offices.
29. The Council currently owns 55 community halls and centres. Annual maintenance and operational costs of these facilities is \$1.5M - \$2.0M. These assets have a replacement value of approximately \$30M. However, the Council's role in the provision of community facilities is not limited to the facilities that it owns. Through a variety of means, the Council also supports community activities taking place in a range of community facilities.
30. In addition to the role that the Council plays, there are numerous other players involved in the provision of community facilities and the activities that occur in them, including sports clubs and community groups. Community facilities are distributed relatively unevenly across the city with some communities having greater access to facilities than others. Consequently, there are opportunities for the Council to support the provision of facilities more equitably.
31. In order to best meet the needs of the community it is envisaged that the Council will encourage community access to a mix of facilities through a range of different roles (Funding, Support and Provision).

32. Over time it is envisaged that Council ownership of community facilities should be focused more upon facilities that serve suburban needs. This would be achieved through the development of a network of multi-functional suburban facilities that are distributed equitably across the city. This approach recognises it is unaffordable, or realistic, for the Council to own and maintain a network of facilities that meets the entire region's needs at the neighbourhood level. Additionally, there are a range of other providers that successfully operate facilities that meet needs at the neighbourhood level. Therefore, it is important that the Council takes account of these other community facilities by ensuring that the Council facilities complements, rather than duplicates or competes with other providers.
33. The Council will continue to provide community access to metropolitan, rural and neighbourhood facilities. However, the Council's role will be more focused on its role in terms of funding and support (as opposed to ownership). It is expected that this would be a gradual transition over the next 1 - 20 years.
34. Following approval of the draft document by the Council a period of consultation will be carried out, primarily with community and voluntary organisations and government agencies. It is anticipated that presentations will be made at a series of network meetings that bring together significant numbers of interested and/or affected people to ensure maximum coverage. In addition a meeting will be held in each community board area, as well as a metropolitan meeting to provide a further opportunity for any interested parties who have not attended one of the relevant network meetings.
35. Consultation on the Draft Community Development Strategy incorporating information on the review of Community Group Grants and Community Facilities Plan will be completed before Christmas. It is anticipated that the final version will be presented to the Council in March 2007.