

6. DRAFT OLDER PERSONS' POLICY

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Strategy and Planning, DDI 941-8177
Officer responsible:	Strong Communities Programme Manager
Author:	Adair Bruorton, Policy Analyst

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend that the draft, revised Older Persons' Policy be made available for wider community consultation. A copy of the draft revised policy is attached.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Council's Older Persons' Policy 1998 has been reviewed during this year. The purpose of the review is three-fold:
 - (a) To review the Council's contribution to fulfilling the goals of the government's New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy 2001
 - (b) To enable the Council to anticipate and consider the needs and wellbeing of the growing number of older people in the community, as part of fulfilling its Strategic Directions and the Community Outcomes
 - (c) To ensure awareness of the policy is incorporated in all the Council units' long-term and operational planning.
3. The review has included widespread consultation with organisations and community groups associated with older people. An interim external reference group was established to further assist the review. Its membership comprised representatives from welfare, social and community organisations. Relevant Council staff have also been consulted.
4. The revised, draft policy is called the Ageing Together Policy (Attachment 1). The increasing number of older people in our communities, their increased life expectancy, expectations of prolonged workplace and voluntary contribution, and growing emphasis by health services on 'ageing in place' will require positive, intergenerational, inclusive support by the Council and community to ensure the wellbeing of older people, their families, whanau and carers.

KEY ISSUES

5. The review process identified three key issues relating to Council services that affect the wellbeing of older people in the community. These are reflected in the draft revised policy's goals.
 - Access to information
 - Access to places and services in the community
 - Opportunities for participation.
6. There is widespread recognition that successful implementation of a revised policy is dependent on:
 - Improved awareness and promotion of the needs, contribution, and opportunities for older people in the community and workplace
 - Wider education within the Council about the consequences of the changing, ageing population
 - Inclusive service delivery that recognises the issues and needs faced by older people.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7. There are no direct financial implications but the policy will require Council units to have regard to the needs of older people as part of their operational planning, which may impact on the future cost of service.
8. The revised draft policy complies with the relevant legislation, ie Human Rights Act 1993, Health Act 1956 and Local Government Act 2002.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council approve the revised, draft Ageing Together Policy, as set out in the attachment, for wider community consultation.

BACKGROUND ON REVIEW OF OLDER PERSONS' POLICY

9. New Zealand's population is ageing. Over the next twenty years there will be a significant shift in the demographic shape of the country's population, largely due to the bulge of the 'baby boomer' generation reaching retirement age (60-74 age bracket). By 2026 21% of Christchurch's population will be aged over 65 years. Life expectancy for both men and women is increasing and by 2030 there will be twice as many people aged 85+ as now.
10. The Council's existing Older Persons' Policy was adopted in 1998. Since then, there have been some very successful initiatives and work undertaken in implementation. These include:
 - Provision of social housing for older people - 66% of Council housing is rented by older people.
 - Specialist library collections and services for the sight-impaired, housebound and those in residential care.
 - Recreation programmes and facilities catering for the physical needs of older people; discounted rates for regular attendees at many leisure centre classes.
 - Free mobility scooters available to the public in the cultural precinct.
 - Community Development Advisers' close work with community organisations to support the development of services for older people.
 - Research into older people (for example, 'Population Ageing and a Profile of Christchurch's Older People (Jan 2005), Hagley/Ferrymead's Older Persons' Project.
 - Establishment of the position of Metropolitan Community Adviser, Older Adults and People with Disability.
 - Ongoing participation in sector network liaison.
11. However, there is a recognition that the Council will need to address the consequences of an ageing population with greater focus in the future, to enable it to meet its Strategic Directions, the Community Outcomes and the goals of the government's New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy.
12. The reasons for having an Older Persons' Policy include:
 - Recognition of the rights of older people in the Christchurch community.
 - A vehicle for Council to consider major demographic change.
 - A statement of intent of the Council's commitment to meeting the needs of older people in the Christchurch community.
 - Confirmation of the Council's intent to contribute to the goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy 2001.
13. Positive current work, such as outlined above, will continue in the future. However, additional work is required to ensure the revised policy's implementation. This includes:
 - Education and awareness-raising amongst Council units as a means of integrating the policy into planning and service delivery.
 - Establishment of an external reference group to support implementation and sector collaboration.
 - Regular monitoring of progress and achievement of action plans' implementation and well-being of older people.
 - Recognition of the Council's role in the community as an advocate for the rights and needs of older people and as a collaborator with health and social agencies to ensure relevant information-sharing and identification of regional needs.
14. Elected members and the Executive Team have been informed of the policy review's progress and process:
 - Strong Communities Portfolio Group presentation on 31 August 2006
 - Councillor seminar on 5 September 2006
 - Executive Team presentation on 11 September 2006
 - Community Board Seminar on 5 October 2006
 - Council meeting to adopt draft policy for public consultation - 19 October 2006

15. Widespread, responsive, positive stakeholder consultation has been undertaken during the review, assisted by very supportive sector networks which the Council participates in.
16. The draft policy will be made available to key health and welfare agencies and networks, older persons' community and lobby groups, and other relevant community stakeholders.
17. The attachment to the report is:

Attachment A: The Draft Revised Older Persons' Policy (Ageing Together Policy)

SUMMARY

18. The attached revised, draft policy will result in improved alignment of Council planning and service delivery with the needs and expectations of an ageing population and the goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy. Approval of this report will commence a consultation process with final determination in February 2007.