

9. INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR WALKING - PROPOSAL TO BECOME SIGNATORY

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to consider an approach which has been made to the Council regarding the option of becoming a signatory to the International Charter for Walking.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Walking is a fundamental part of our travel, whether it be to and from our car, to and from the bus or to and from our home and work. It provides important health, transport, environmental, social and local economic benefits. "Walkable" cities are consistently more successful and attractive.
3. The Council has received an approach from Living Streets Aotearoa (an incorporated national walking advocacy organisation) promoting the International Charter for Walking, to which it is encouraging local authorities across New Zealand to become signatories. The Charter was developed at the Walk21 Conference in Melbourne, 2006, the seventh international Walk21 walking conference through the collaboration and debate of a number of world leaders in walking issues. It was also presented to the New Zealand Walking Conference in November 2006, at which the Charter was signed by the Hon. Annette King MP, Minister for Health and Transport on behalf of the government. The full charter is attached, and may also be found at <http://www.walk21.com/charter>.
4. The purpose of the Charter is to identify the needs of people on foot and provides a common framework to help authorities refocus their existing policies, activities and relationships to achieve greater use of walking. Its key focus is to "create healthy, efficient and sustainable communities where people choose to walk". The Charter is being promoted to a wide range of sectors including urban design, health, local government, recreation and transport.
5. The invitation from Living Streets Aotearoa to become a signatory states that doing so does not commit the Council to any specific actions or any budgetary implications. Instead it is promoted as providing a clear signal by the Council that it values walking and wishes to create a supportive environment for it.
6. The Charter comprises a cover page (with a summary of the commitment and the signature space), followed by a background page and a range of possible action points related to each principle of the Charter.
7. The essence of the Charter is consistent with and promotes similar desired outcomes to many Council strategies, particularly the transport strategies (including the Pedestrian Strategy) and the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (which promotes better access for walking as a key action to achieve its overall settlement objectives).
8. A pedantic assessment of the document would raise concerns in at least two areas: firstly, the proposed rights of people to be able to walk safely and to enjoy high quality public spaces anywhere and at anytime. There are examples, such as the closing of the Botanic Gardens at night, where the Council would not be consistent with this commitment and with good reason. The legal operation of motorways in Christchurch is another example where this commitment could not be achieved. Secondly, there are some actions in the latter pages which the Council may not wish to adopt, yet could be exposed to criticism by walking advocates if the Council is a signatory. Examples, such as walking safety, would not be compromised in the design of facilities for cycling - this is seen as too black and white, whereas good practice design seeks to find an acceptable balance of safety for all users; or where dual cycleway/footpath facilities are installed, then there may be unavoidable points of conflict.

9. Becoming a signatory to this Charter is in many ways similar to the Council being a signatory to the Urban Design Protocol and the Healthy Cities Charter. It recognises and commits to being part of a community of like minded individuals and organisations that promotes, facilitates and commits to implementing the principles and objectives of the collectively signed document.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no financial implications for the Council directly related to this proposal.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

11. Yes.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

12. The Council has no legal obligation to sign this charter, nor would any legal commitments be made by becoming a signatory. However there would be moral implications to act in accordance with the charter.

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

13. Yes.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

14. Becoming a signatory would not be inconsistent with the LTCCP or Activity Management Plans, and the Charter is aligned with a number of Community Outcomes.

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

15. The recommendation to sign the Charter may influence the Council to improve its activities to support levels of service related to the transport system operation.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

16. The views expressed in the Charter are aligned with the Council's transport strategies, Healthy Christchurch, the Urban Design Protocol and the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy. Any subsequent review of strategies, such as the Pedestrian Strategy, should be aligned with the principles of the charter.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

17. Yes.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

18. None required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council accept the invitation to become a signatory to the International Charter for Walking, with the Mayor signing on the Council's behalf.