

**SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL'S
DRAFT LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN
("OUR COMMUNITY PLAN – CHRISTCHURCH O-TAUTAHI 2004/14")
BY FENDALTON/WAIMAIRI COMMUNITY BOARD**

The Board welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Council's first Long Term Council Community Plan.

The Board wishes to be heard in support of this submission.

i) INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding to comment on a number of matters included in the Plan, it is deemed appropriate to comment on the suitability of the document and its value for and use by, the Christchurch public. Unfortunately the comment on this aspect is not complimentary.

The Board considers that the Plan or, rather, the three volumes (five when the MCTS and draft Waste Plan are included), is not at all user friendly. There appears to be much duplication within the three volumes, a scarcity of information in some areas (e.g. the changes to operational funding compared with the present position), and too much detail covering the policies section in Volume 3.

In general terms the Board considers that the Plan is not one that will attract great interest from the community at large. In acknowledging that this represents the first interpretation of the requirements of the new Act, it is expected that the experience in 2004 should aid the development of a future document in 2006 that the community can really accept, as a partner with the Council. The aim for the 2006 LTCCP should be for a reduction in volume to approximately 50% of this years document(s).

ii) COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

The Board generally endorses the nine community outcomes forming the basis for the Long Term Plan, although it is expected that the more extensive consultation of sectors within the community will give more confidence, in the 2006 Plan, that the identified outcomes will, then, definitely form the basis for "our community plan".

iii) RATE INCREASE PROJECTIONS

While acknowledging that there are a number of major projects and initiatives programmed for the years ahead, the Board views that the projected increases for the immediate future years are at the upper end of acceptability by the community.

It is of concern, however, that there are seriously high increases projected for the 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 financial years. These are not considered to be acceptable in such long term planning, and the Board considers that strenuous efforts should be taken at an early stage to review these and to provide for lower increases and more acceptability by the community at large.

iv) UNIFORM ANNUAL GENERAL CHARGE

In previous years submissions, the Board has consistently suggested that the level of the Uniform Annual General Charge was too low and is not representative of a charge on ratepayers commensurate with the extent of costs involved in providing core services to the community. On the basis that approximately 50% of the rate take relates to these core services then it seemed appropriate that a much higher Uniform Annual General Charge should apply in recognition generally of all ratepayers utilising core services.

The Board therefore recommends that the Council reconsiders the opportunity for some increase above the existing level of \$105 per rating unit.

v) **USER CHARGES – MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

The Board is conscious of ongoing costs in relation to the operation of the Canterbury Museum and the new Art Gallery and is aware that there has been some discussion regarding the option for user charges to be introduced.

The Board is supportive of charges being levied on visitors to these facilities, in a similar manner to those for other recreation, and arts and culture, facilities in the city. While there may be difficulties in differentiating between different types of visitors, if this is in fact required, the Board considers that a regime of charging should be implemented as soon as possible with a view to reducing the imposition on local rates.

vi) **CLEANLINESS OF STREETS/LITTER**

The Board has been concerned to note that there has been a lowering of standards in respect of the cleanliness of city streets and parks. While noting and endorsing the proposal for additional costs toward a central city litter collection the Board considers that further action needs to be taken on a city-wide basis to deal with this overall issue.

The anti-litter education programme budgeting for an additional \$50,000 per annum is supported and the Board will be interested to observe the outcomes from this initiative.

On the matter of overall cleanliness and appearance of city streets, the Board does acknowledge the dedicated efforts of those property owners who assist the Council in maintaining tidy adjacent grass berm areas. The Board wonders whether this effort could be rewarded in a tangible manner, or in some appropriate promotional recognition.

vii) **SAFER CHRISTCHURCH**

While the Board supports moves towards making Christchurch a safer place to live in, it is extremely concerned to note that, yet again, there is a requirement for the Council to fund an initiative earlier funded by Central Government.

The Board has noted that this particular initiative has taken a similar path to that of Neighbourhood Support Groups which were originally supported and resourced through the New Zealand Police.

If the decision is taken to confirm the \$100,000 allocated toward Safer Christchurch, the Board would seek clear performance measures to ensure that ratepayers money was being utilised for clear and achievable outcomes.

viii) **LIBRARIES - OPENING HOURS**

The Board is pleased to note that additional funding has been provided to enable an extension of hours to libraries in the city, and is particularly supportive of the additional \$50,000 per annum which will enable four community libraries, including Fendalton, to provide extended opening hours on Saturdays. The Board endorses these moves and looks forward to further evaluation of options which could provide for opening also on Sundays.

ix) **JELLIE PARK AQUALAND**

The Board has noted that over \$5.5 million has been allocated over the next two financial years and that a report is expected to be brought to the Board within a few months dealing with details relating to the modification and the timing proposed for the work.

The Board endorses the expenditure provided for the upgrade of this facility and the overall intention to respond to a long standing neglect in maintaining this important and popular facility.

x) **DECENTRALISATION**

In previous years the Board has submitted on the importance of the matter of providing service to the community in the community. In this context the Board has been aware of the value, expressed through customers, of being able to source information and support without the need for the more difficult task of proceeding into the inner city for such support.

The Board is concerned to note that some \$53 million is to be expended on a new Civic Offices. While acknowledging that existing working conditions are less than satisfactory for many staff in Civic Offices

the Board urges the Council to ensure that opportunities for decentralisation of council staff are not overlooked in the overall exercise.

With the moves enunciated by the new Local Government Act to work more closely in partnership with the community, and a likely enhanced role of the community boards in the next term, it is important that services are continued and expanded where appropriate, in the community. The removal some years ago of officers from the City Streets Unit (now City Transport Unit), together with Building and Consent resources, from some decentralised locations, has left an unfortunate gap in the provision of day to day services of this kind both to the community and to Boards.

xi) UNDERGROUNDING

The Board is concerned that there is not a major move toward the undergrounding of overhead services throughout the city. While the present policy of providing for a 50:50 partnership with streets in the community has enabled the undergrounding of some streets in the Board's community, it is of concern that fairness and equity can not prevail on a city wide basis.

The Board considered it important that where major upgrading of streets occur (i.e. kerb and channel renewal on both sides) then undergrounding should accompany such programmes. If the cost of achieving this is beyond present means, or beyond a moderate increase in funding allocation, then the Council may consider the option of slowing the renewal programme to better accommodate the total upgrading of these streets.

xii) SOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

In a previous years submission, the Board drew the Council's attention to a support that was being provided by the north west Community Boards in the then newly formed Asian Youth Trust. The Board was pleased to note that, on the basis of this being an entity that was working for the betterment of integration of Asians in the wider city area it was therefore agreed by the Council that this would be funded on a metropolitan basis.

In recent months the Board has become involved in providing financial support to the Youth Forever Club which it is now noted operates also on a metropolitan basis. The Board therefore contends that the Council should now move to provide central funding support for this entity on a similar basis to that agreed to for the Asian Youth Trust.

xiii) OUT OF SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

In previous submissions the Board has expressed its view that funding for Out of School Programmes should have really been a responsibility of central government. More recently the Board was pleased to learn that the Government had acknowledged this point, and had provided substantial funding through the Ministry of Social Development in support of Out of School Programmes.

The Board's view therefore is that there is a strong case for a substantial reduction to apply in respect of Council funding for these programmes. The Board has noted that the impact of the government funding has meant that the programmes supported to date in the Fendalton/Waimairi community do not now require the same level of support from the Board as previously.

The Board also notes that there is a report pending on the extent, or otherwise, of ongoing Council support for out of school/after school programmes and it is hoped that this report will confirm that the impact of government funding will enable a dramatic reduction of the use of ratepayers funds in these areas.

xiv) CONSULTATION WITH MAORI

The Board is concerned to note that the draft Plan includes a specific provision of almost \$250,000 for consultation with Maori, and that this is in addition to the general cost of consultation with the wider community.

While acknowledging that the new Local Government Act provides for processes for consulting with Maori, as "persons who will or may be affected by" Council proposals and decisions, the Board does not view that there is a separate need to identify specific costs for consultation with Maori. The matter of consultation with all sector groups should be provided for in broader terms within the overall cost of any project, or proposal, initiated by the Council.

xv) **YMCA – BISHOPDALE**

Over recent years the Board has been working in close partnership with the YMCA to identify the means for supporting their initiative in developing a new facility to replace the seriously outdated facility in Greers Road, Bryndwr. As an outcome from this exercise, the YMCA has identified the opportunity to relocate their activities to Bishopdale in close proximity to the Council's community facility, which is managed on a day to day basis by the YMCA.

While the agreement to move to Bishopdale was based on the existing provision of Council land there have been ongoing difficulties in achieving a design that could be accommodated on the land that the Council had available. In particular there have appeared to be significant difficulties in either locating a new building on one of the carparks or on the adjacent Bishopdale Park. Notwithstanding these difficulties the YMCA showed particular initiative in acquiring another section of land which had, until then, been earmarked for residential development. This initiative clearly showed the definite commitment on the part of YMCA to become a future partner in the provision of facilities at the Bishopdale complex.

While the discussion and planning has been underway for a few years, the Board has remained most supportive of the YMCA and was pleased to note in late 2003 that the Council also endorsed its support for a partnership with the YMCA. The Board therefore re-endorses the partnership with this recreation provider and looks to the Council to provide a tangible form of support as part of this ongoing relationship.

xvi) **VEHICLE ENTRANCEWAY RESEALING POLICY**

In recent months the Board has brought the matter of this policy to the attention of the Council, through the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee. While addressing the overall fairness of the policy city wide, the particular issue was raised in support of concerns received from residents of Harkness Place in Avonhead.

The Board's concern (and also that of the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board) was that during footpath resealing in streets where the footpaths exist only on one side of the street, the vehicle entranceways are resealed only on the side that includes the footpath. The concern from the residents (including those who had their entranceways resealed) was that this was an unfair policy.

The Board, through its representation to the STU Committee, has requested that this particular policy be reviewed in line with fairness and equity for all residents of the city, and that an appropriate funding provision be made.

xvii) **NEW CAPITAL INITIATIVES**

- **Botanic Gardens**

The Board is most supportive of the additional capital funding allocated toward upgrading at the Botanic Gardens. It is considered important that this very popular facility is presented and maintained to a standard in keeping with the Garden City Image so keenly portrayed by the Council and the community.

- **Flatwater Facility**

The Board is not supportive of the development of a facility at the proposed Lake Isaac site. The Board contends that any such threat to the operation of the Christchurch International Airport must not be allowed to affect this vitally important and major South Island asset.

The Board is however supportive of further evaluation of other sites with a view to providing a facility, not necessarily of international standard, which can meet the growing needs of water based sports people in Christchurch and the wider region.

- **Putrescibles Processing**

The Board is supportive of the cautious approach being exercised on the matter of putrescibles collection and processing, and of the intention to commence relationships with commercial activities in the city in the first instance. Previous experiences with the recycling initial start up, and the staged removal now agreed for rubbish bags, is considered an approach that will be more readily accepted by the whole community. It is important however that ongoing education and the promotion of the success in the Council's drive toward zero waste achievement is maintained.

xviii) **CAPITAL ENDOWMENT FUND**

The Board is not supportive of a ratio change of 70:30 to 60:40 in order that there is a greater level of funding available for "community projects" in future years. While there has been a commitment to funding for work associated with the upgrading at the Canterbury Museum, it is understood that this will shortly come to an end. The resulting availability of funding for community projects, at 30% of the funds capacity, should enable a number of worthwhile initiatives to be supported each year.

In addition the Board considers that the Council's long term planning already provides sufficient budget allocation, within a range of different activity groups, for the future provision of civic or community projects. The major facility provision for a future new pool and a proposed multi use facility, together with a range of smaller projects including public art works are typical of projects already provided for.

The Board views the matter of "economic development" to be of much greater value to the city than 'community projects', and urges that the Council therefore retain a level of 70% of the Fund for this purpose.

xix) **DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION POLICY**

The Board is concerned to note that there is no specific provision (refer Page 65, Volume 3) for the "community infrastructure" category of expenditure from development contributions over the next ten year period. Of equal concern is the fact that there appears to be no opportunity to vary this level of commitment through a "positive outcome of a Special Consultative Procedure" (Page 59, Volume 3).

Elsewhere in the Plan (Pages 52 and 54 of Volume 2) there is reference to the "functional obsolescence" of some of the Council's existing community facilities, the "ineffectiveness of meeting current needs", and facilities being "expensive to operate". In the light of this summary of the overall effectiveness of existing facilities it is disturbing to note that there is a future zero provision for modifications, replacement, or the provision of new facilities.

The most surprising point however is that there continues to be extensive growth in the residential areas of Christchurch, with a number of particular local settlements such as Northwood, and Aidanfield/Halswell on the Park, which have been provided without any associated community infrastructure at all. With the further creation of similar settlements in the city, and the continued lack of provision for some related "community infrastructure" this does not seem to represent an outcome of sound strategic planning in the city's growth, and therefore continued well-being.

The Board therefore requests the Council to urgently address the adequacy of present strategic growth planning in order that the future citizens of the city are provided with facilities which are compatible with community needs and expectations.

xx) **PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

In last years submission the Board referred to the option of "land exchange or gifting" being added as a "Type of PPP Participation". This was acknowledged at the time with a recommendation that the words "Contribution of Land" be added to the list.

Unfortunately this amendment did not appear to have been recognised in the 2003/04 Final Plan, and it does not appear in the draft text on Page 106 this year.

The Board requests that this acknowledgement be included in the 2004 Long Term Plan.

xxi) **POLICY FOR DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE**

In the submission to last years draft Annual Plan, the Board recommended that the Capital Endowment Fund should be listed as one of the "strategic assets" in view of the significant level of funding included in the Fund. The Council, on that occasion, did not agree with this recommendation.

The Board, again, suggests that the significant level of funding, and the strict criteria related to it, does rate this Fund as one of significance.

The Board notes that any alterations of the mode of delivery for significant activities are required to be made using the Special Consultative Procedure, either through the LTCCP/Annual Plan process, or through a separate procedure. The significance of the Fund (of some \$75 million), and the contribution of this (principally through economic development) in terms of its impact on the wellbeing of Christchurch, is considered by the Board to be listed as a strategic asset together with the others recorded on Pages 125 and 136, Volume 3, of the Plan.

xxii) DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

The Board notes (on Pages 62, Volume 2) that reasonably low performance measures have been defined for public satisfaction with the way in which Council involves the public in its decision making. The Board considers that, with "community buy-in" as prescribed by the new Act, and with the partnership with the community in the preparation of the new LTCCP(s), and other consultative processes, that there should be a much greater effort made to achieve higher levels of satisfaction.

The Board considers that an overall level of satisfaction from the people of Christchurch could also assist with improving the very low voter turnout at the triennial elections.

An additional matter that the Board views as important is the need to design a much "smarter" performance measure for funding accountability (ref. Elected Members Projects, Page 62, Volume 2). Rather than requiring members to be "satisfied" it would seem far more appropriate to refer to "regular reporting (define if necessary?) to the Council and Boards on outcomes from funding allocations". The existing performance indicator requiring Boards to received two progress reports during the year, on outcomes achieved, would seem to set a standard along the lines of what is required.

As the Council has been aware the Board has been supportive of a reduced level of governance (i.e. the numbers of elected members) in the city, but with support for the retention of existing community boundaries. Now that the decision has been made for a "slimmed down" Council, the Board also considers that it is prudent for the development of appropriate measures in line with expected overall efficiencies in Council operations (i.e. by achieving reductions in rates over the short period ahead, or through some other tangible efficiency outcomes.) In other words there now needs to be a substantiation to the claim that "smaller is better".

xxiii) METROPOLITAN CHRISTCHURCH TRANSPORT STATEMENT

The content and direction of the document in planning for the future land transport needs in and around Christchurch for the next twenty years are generally endorsed by the Board.

Elsewhere in this submission, the Board highlights what seems to be an omission by the Council to commit to a strategic approach in the provision of community infrastructure/facilities especially in suburban areas currently and likely to experience significant growth in coming years.


The Board notes that the consequences of such growth will place added pressure on existing main road networks.

Given that the MCTS forms one part of an evolving urban development strategy, the Board would ask that the Council address the transport related consequences arising from these suburban growth pressures.

The integration of existing strategies, planning and policies documents in the development and operation of the city's future transport system and infrastructure is endorsed by the Board.

xxiv) PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS

The Board continues to note, with concern, the ongoing loss of important heritage buildings in the city. With a view to overcoming these losses the Board urges the Council to construct a planned approach to ensure that there is a mechanism available, together with an appropriate level of funding support, for the retention of at least the most significant of these buildings. While noting that this may eventuate in some small increase in ratepayers funding the Board also considers that opportunities should be taken in conjunction/partnership with business interests in the city to protect the historical aspects of the city's development.


Mike Wall
CHAIRMAN

4 May 2004