

## Our Community Plan – Submission

From:

Joan Blatchford  
38 Longhust Tce,  
Christchurch, 8002.

Phone:  
03 332 8768 or 027 334 9471  
Email joan.blatchford@ xtra.co.nz

My submission refers to the full version and I ask that this be considered as a written submission.

### Issues

#### Governance

Since the change to a smaller Council, my experience is that the links and relationships between the Council, Community Boards and their communities are loosening rather than strengthening and the measures on P111 of the plan ***47% of residents satisfied with the way the Council involves the public in decision making*** and ***57% of residents satisfied that the Council makes decisions in the best interests of Christchurch*** would support that view.

I see that the target for this year for both of these measures is 75% but there are no accompanying actions which would give me confidence that the Council will move from these low figures to 75%. I note also that in “proposed reductions” p87, that the Council is suggesting it reduce the number of times it communicates with its citizens via City Scene from 10 to 9 with a saving of \$22,000.

#### Action

The Council needs to act quickly to analyse why this loss in confidence has happened and from there should take corrective action to increase the trust of the people of Christchurch in its ability to govern successfully.

Reducing communication with citizens about Council activities and actions will not help restore this trust. If City Scene is not an effective channel of communication, then divert the funds into something which will reach more people.

Increased use of Community Boards in major decision making and community advocacy would be one positive action

#### **Issue**

#### **Proposed Savings P86**

#### **General Comment**

I am concerned about the list of proposed savings. The services and activities selected for closure are those which will naturally raise community concern and activism resulting in a likely Council back-down based on public opinion!

I find it hard to believe that with an operational expenditure budget of over \$360 million, there were not other less contentious areas for reduction in expenditure which could have been added to this list for public comment. Why not add Early Learning Centres which are already flagged for review? Government is taking a more active role in funding this area and there are a large number of providers in this field. Getting out of Early Learning Centres would save about \$450,000 in operational spending. The lease or sale of Our City O-Tautahi, a building which appears underutilised, would bring in excess of another \$500,000!

#### **Services and activities considered for reduction. P86**

#### **Closing community facilities and changing service levels.**

These facilities and services have all grown out of a community need at the time and all do have a natural life. Populations move and some services or buildings become less useful or relevant over time. However, any change in the use of these facilities, or other services, should be considered in the context of a long term strategy, not as a pick and mix selection from the range of Council activities at a time of a squeeze on rates. Any change in services should be put out for community comment in context. If the changes are logical and rational, then the Council will gain the support it needs.

#### **Use New Zealand Post for all Council Payments.**

This is a move worthy of consideration and one which would improve access for many people who wish to pay in person. However, if this leads to a downgrading of the services at local service centres, then this implies another pull back in terms of community engagement.

The way this proposal is communicated in the LTCCP does not give readers any idea of the implications. This is a matter of significance for local communities. If the move does mean the downgrading of services levels at local service centres, then Council must consult on this before acting.

## **Policy on determining Significance p 291**

### **Specific comment:**

1 I do not support the change in the criteria of significance for decisions on operating expenditure. If an item is not already flagged in the LTCCP, then anything over \$500,000 must mean a change in focus and this should be a matter for consultation.

2. I note the change in wording on strategic assets from "equity in" assets which is written in the present policy, to "controlling interest in" assets. If the wording change is to signal a possible sell down of assets, then in the interests of transparency, this should be a matter for consultation. Christchurch has been proud of the fact that it has retained a significant asset base and its citizens would want to understand the reasons for the sell-down or sale.

3. Those working at the community level e.g. residents associations are unsure about when they can expect to be consulted on issues of importance to them. A clear policy which outlines the community consultation approach would clarify our expectations.

### **Provision of agendas – measure p111**

I was pleased to see that the Council makes available 100% of its reports and agendas two clear working days prior to each meeting. I am however, unclear about the meaning of "makes available" and to whom reports and agendas are provided and would like clarification.

### **Action**

Reports and agendas should be placed on the Council's Internet site two clear days before a meeting to ensure all interested parties have access to these documents.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues I've raised

Joan Blatchford