

19. CHARGES FOR THE OCCUPATION OF RESERVE LAND BY SPORTS CLUBS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

RR 9225

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Corporate Plan Output: Customer Services Output: Leases 19.4.8	

The purpose of this report is to request the establishment of a hearings panel to consider submissions from sports clubs and community groups in response to a discussion paper entitled "Charges For Occupation of Reserve Land" circulated to them in March 1998.

HISTORY

The five territorial local authorities which were amalgamated to form the Christchurch City Council in 1989 had different charging policies for the occupation of reserve land by sports clubs and community groups, ranging from peppercorn rentals through to rentals which covered the cost of essential services (water and sewage etc) administration of the lease, and a small payment for the privilege of occupying reserve land. These policies are still in force today, nine years after the amalgamation of the five territorial local authorities into the present Christchurch City Council.

An officer working party comprising staff from the Parks, Property and Financial Services Units spent considerable time putting together a discussion paper which the previous Parks and Recreation Committee approved in early 1998 for circulation to sports clubs and community groups seeking their views on the proposals put forward. The discussion paper was circulated in March 1998 for a period of three months to ensure that as many of the affected parties as possible had time to comment upon the proposals put forward. A number of sports clubs and community groups requested extra time to consider the proposals, the reason being the complexity of some of the issues involved. The then chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee, Councillor Freeman, extended the closing date for submissions to 30 September 1998 to allow more time for consideration of the discussion paper.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A POLICY IN PLACE

The present charges for the occupation of reserve land is based on the policies of the former territorial local authorities and are not fair or equitable to the present lessees across the city. There have been a number of new leases granted, the documentation for which has been completed except for the charging section because presently there is no uniform charging policy. A number of leases have come up for rental review as per the requirement of their leases. However these reviews have been unable to be completed because of the lack of a uniform policy. There is therefore a pressing need for a 'Charging for the Occupation of Reserve Land Policy' to be put in place so that the above outlined administrative matters can be addressed properly, and to enable present lessees to plan their affairs ahead with some certainty.

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Over 172 discussion documents were sent out to sports clubs, community groups and other interested parties seeking their views, 79 replies being received, 35 of which request speaking rights in support of their submission before a hearings panel.

An analysis of the submissions received shows there is a wide range of views as to how the charging issue should be approached, some clubs believing that the proposals put forward are fair, whilst others believe that peppercorn rentals only should be paid. Numerous reasons were put forward in support of the submissions received, some examples are given below.

- Falling membership because of changing lifestyles.
- All maintenance and upkeep of the facility is paid for by the club.
- Principally a training organisation for young people.
- The club/organisation is principally run by volunteers.
- Provides a much needed community service within the community, etc.

HEARINGS PANEL

The Council has constituted a Council Hearings Panel and has delegated to it the authority to hear various reserves issues. The task of considering and hearing submissions put forward from submitters on the proposed charging policy has not been delegated to the Hearings Panel by the Council. It will therefore be necessary for a hearings panel to be appointed for this purpose.

- Recommendation:**
1. That a hearings panel be set up to consider and hear submissions on the discussion paper and to make recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Committee; such recommendations to form the basis of the proposed Charging Policy for the Occupation of Reserve Land by Sports Clubs and Community Groups.
 2. That officers then prepare and submit a draft policy on “Charges for the Occupation of Reserve Land by Sports Clubs and Community Groups” to the Committee for recommendation to the Council for adoption.

Chairman’s

- Recommendation:**
1. That the above recommendation be adopted.
 2. That the members of the hearings panel be Councillor Buist (Chairman) and Councillors Sheriff and Baker.