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The purpose of this report is to advise the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board of a proposal to establish accommodation for the Riccarton Service Centre, operated by Council staff, as an alternative to the Council Agency proposal (Smiths City Market) tendered at a previous meeting on 5 May 1999.

A consultation process with residents has been undertaken. The results of this process indicate a strong preference for Council services to continue to be delivered from an office or agency in the Riccarton area. A new option to deliver service from New Zealand Post Shop, Riccarton Road, has been identified. The Riccarton / Wigram Community Board is invited to comment on this recommendation which will be put to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Riccarton Service Centre was established in 1989 with the other Council Service Centres. The Council's lease on the current office has expired and the property is being rented on a month by month basis. Service Centre activities include:

- Receipting of Council accounts
- Providing information on Council activities
- Taking enquiries and complaints on Council activities
- Selling Council and other organisations products

Current hours of operation are 8.45am to 5.00pm Monday – Friday.

As outlined in the earlier report to this Community Board there is now a decline in transactions at the Service Centre. This is due to the loss of the Southpower agency; a move by customers to direct debiting of rates; the loss of drivers licensing agency; and the move to postal dog registration (ie reply paid envelopes). This decline has resulted in a considerable amount of staff down time, with busy periods peaking four times per year during the last week of rates payments and at dog registration time.

Details regarding the business decline are contained in the previous Report submitted to the Board on 5 May 1999.

#### **CONSULTATION PROCESS**

A consultation process with the residents of the Riccarton area was undertaken and thirty groups were invited to respond to open-ended questions. Twenty-one responses were returned and opinions covered the following areas.

##### **Services**

- There was a strong demand for continuation of existing services, with an emphasis on the need to provide council and community information

**Hours of Service**

- There was a general acknowledgement that hours of opening could be reduced, if necessary, to either 9.00 or 10.00am to about 4.00pm depending on option adopted

**Service Provider**

- Quality of service (prompt and friendly) is important to customers
- There was a strong demand for Council employees to deliver the service within the Riccarton community
- Respondents indicated an agency arrangement may be acceptable if the quality of service is maintained

**Location**

- Respondents preferred the service to be delivered in the general vicinity of the present location, with good parking and easy access to the building

**GENERAL**

- Some concerns were expressed about moving to an agency arrangement
- Some respondents favoured the Riccarton Community Centre as a location
- Support was also expressed for operating from within a bank or shop

Based on the feedback from the consultation process it would appear to be important for the Council to retain a presence in the Riccarton area. Two possible venues (Smiths City Market, Riccarton and New Zealand Post Shop, Riccarton) for delivery of Council services have been investigated. Smiths City Market has recently withdrawn their proposal. Another possible venue was the Riccarton Community Centre. This was not, however, considered to be viable option due to space limitations and security issues.

**New Zealand Post Shop Proposal**

The New Zealand Post Properties has put forward a proposal, which would allow the Riccarton Service Centre to conduct operations from a counter within the New Zealand Post Shop, Riccarton. The Post Shop is situated on Riccarton Road and has access to car parking at the rear of the building.

The hours of operation are 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday – Friday, and on Saturday from 9.00am to 12 midday.

**BENEFITS OF LEASING SPACE WITHIN AN EXISTING BUSINESS PREMISE**

The proposed lease arrangements cover rent, electricity, heating and air conditioning, cleaning, building maintenance, fire protection and insurance. New Zealand Post option could also provide us with a prototype counter and include the cost in the leasing arrangement.

Services that are currently offered from the Riccarton Service Centre could continue to be offered by Council staff from the leased space

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSALS**

The financial “savings” of pursuing this proposal are substantial.

## **STAFFING**

There are opportunities for savings in staffing throughout much of the year as under this arrangement it would not always be necessary to employ two staff full-time.

Note: Additional staffing would be needed if the Service Centre were to deliver service to customers on Saturday mornings.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the feedback from residents it would appear that there is strong feeling for a Council presence in Riccarton. Moving the service centre operation into existing commercial premises allows an on-going Council presence in the Riccarton community and also provides a saving in terms of operational and staffing costs.

New Zealand Post Shop has the added attraction of a street frontage on Riccarton Road, giving location advantages. There is car parking available with easy access from the carpark into the building.

**Recommendation:** That the information be received and the Riccarton / Wigram Community Board support the recommendation to lease space within the Riccarton New Zealand Post Shop, for the delivery of Council services by Council staff.

### **Chairperson's**

**Recommendation:** That the officer's recommendation be endorsed, and advised to the Strategy and Resources Committee.