

5. CHRISTCHURCH YOUTH COUNCIL

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The purpose of this report is to propose the formation of the Youth Council into a Special Committee of the Council.

BACKGROUND

The Christchurch Youth Council was formed in the late 1970s to advise the Council on youth issues. However, the Youth Council has never been legally part of the Council (or incorporated in any way).

Since its formation the Youth Council's role, membership and profile have varied considerably. At times it has struggled to maintain an active membership or to achieve any identifiable outcomes.

In the late 1990s the then Community Advisor Youth made a concerted effort to expand the membership and clarify the functions and status of the Youth Council. Since her appointment in mid-1998, the Youth Advocate has continued this work. As a result the Youth Council's membership has grown considerably and it now has 22 members aged 13 to 22 years.

The roles have been identified as:

- Providing a youth perspective on issues relevant to Council and other organisations
- Working co-operatively with the Youth Advocate to initiate and support programmes and services which benefit young people
- Assisting elected members of the Council and Council staff with youth consultation
- Acting as a bridge between the young people of Christchurch and Council staff and elected members
- Participating in the in the planning of youth focused and intergenerational events

However, efforts to raise the profile of the Youth Council and maximise its function have been hampered by continuing confusion regarding the Youth Council's status, roles and functions and its relationship with the Council.

REVIEW OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL'S STATUS

In late 1999 the Youth Advocate commissioned an independent review of the Youth Council. This review recognised that the clarification of Youth Council role and status holds the potential to greatly enhance the ability of the Youth Council to make a difference in the city.

The review confirmed the perception that the Youth Council should be performing a more significant role and needs a higher profile with elected members, Council units, and young people in Christchurch. The review identified that the impact of Youth Council would be enhanced if it was a "formalised as part of the Council." It identified a number of options including a Standing Committee, a subcommittee of the Community Service Committee, and an independent legal entity. A copy of the review recommendations are attached to this report.

Subsequent to this review, members of the Youth Council, the Youth Advocate, the Manager of the Community Relations Unit, the Children's Advocate, and a Policy Analyst meet with the Council's Legal Services Manager to discuss the proposed structures and the status of the Youth Council. At this meeting it was suggested that the Youth Council could be formed as a Special Committee of the Council.

After further investigation of Special Committees, this proposal was endorsed by the Youth Advocate and by the full Youth Council.

YOUTH COUNCIL AS A SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The establishment of the Youth Council as a Special Committee would formalise the Council and increase the status and credibility of the Youth Council. It would clarify the status of the Youth Council and its relationships with Council and Council Units. It would also clarify the accountabilities, decision-making processes and communication lines.

A "Special committee" is a committee established by the Council for a specific task or focus. It would require standing orders (similar to those of the current Standing Committees). A Special Committee must include a Councillor. Other members of the committee would be appointed by the Council. As a Special Committee the Youth Council would report directly to Council.

The principal provisions from the Local Government Act dealing with committees, including special committees are attached to this report.

FUNDING AND RESOURCING

There are resourcing implications for the Council both in terms of payment and budgets and staff time. Funding is entirely a matter for the Council. There are no clear rules because the situation is relatively unique.

Normally a Standing Committee would have a Council officer responsible for servicing the committee (Committee Secretary) and administrative costs. However, the Council may wish to specify the amount of public funds it wishes to make available to the Youth Council Special Committee annually (at present the Council provides \$15,000 per year for the Youth Council's operations).

The Council may also wish to specify the boundaries on the amount or type of staff and unit resources and time the Committee can request from Council.

Similarly the Council would need to identify whether it wishes to remunerate Youth Council members and if so at what rate.¹

The budget would need to be discussed with the Chairs of Community Services and Strategy and Resources and approved by the Council.

¹ At present Youth Councils receive a \$10 petrol voucher per meeting for 16 meetings per year. Some Youth Councillors also receive fees for participating in review committees and some receive other reimbursements for other related activities.

- Recommendation:**
1. That a Working Group comprising of Chairs of the Community Services and Strategy and Resources and representatives of the Community Services Committee be formed to investigate the establishment of the Youth Council as a Special Committee of the Council.
 2. That the Working Group report back to the Committee on possible standing orders, functions, budget implications, memberships and appointment procedures, impacts on Council staff resources and outcomes and benefits of the proposed Special Committee.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted and the Working Group include two representatives of the Youth Council.