

18. COMMUNITY BOARD SEMINAR MEETING

The Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board Seminar Meeting was held on Thursday 20 July 2000 at 3.30pm. The following matters were considered:

18.1 DISABILITY POLICY

At its meeting on 25 May 2000 the Council adopted a recommendation of the Community Services Committee that the Council develop a Disability Policy as a first step in addressing a number of issues outlined in a report which was before the Council. This report was also considered by the Community Board at its Seminar Meeting.

Margaret Macadam, Policy Analyst, was present at the Seminar meeting to outline the proposed process to be followed to develop this new policy. This process included seeking community views and feedback from Community Boards and from the broad spectrum of groups representing those in the community with disabilities. The Council's internal processes of consultation and also the proposed external consultation processes were outlined to the meeting.

Board members enquired if other Councils have similar Disability Policies and whether they would be parties to this consultation process. Margaret Macadam confirmed that she had done wide investigations on issues and strategies affecting the disabled.

The suggestion was made that when issues were raised with the Community Board or the Council by disabled people they be advised of the proposed consultation process so that they could take part in it.

A further question referred to the appropriateness of the Council appointing a Disability Advocate. Ms Macadam advised that the establishment of this position will be a Council decision but that, until the research is completed, it will not be known whether this is an appropriate option for the Council to take.

Ms Macadam was thanked for her very informative briefing of the meeting.

18.2 COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

The meeting considered a report outlining a communication plan for the Community Board with the objective of creating a planned, deliberate and sustained communication programme with the community and groups and organisations which the Community Board was involved with.

The Corporate Communication Co-ordinator, Sam Fisher, outlined this report to the meeting and led the discussion.

Mr Fisher outlined some of the problems in creating a sustained communication strategy for the Council and Community Boards. The difficulties to be faced include some of the following:

- a) Citizens do not really know exactly what the Council does and what the Council's processes are. Misconceptions can therefore arise.
- b) The Council tends to put out mixed and many messages. A strategy is therefore necessary to deal with this. The conclusion has to be drawn that the community does not know a great deal about the Community Board and its function.

The discussion then outlined ways in which the Community Board could communicate with its community.

18.3 DISABILITY ISSUES

At the meeting of the Community Board held on 5 July 2000, a letter was considered from the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc, raising concerns at the proposed road alterations and traffic lights at the intersection of Kerrs and Buckleys Roads in Bromley. At this meeting, Mr Kevin Murray, Chairman of the Association, and Mrs Gloria Weeks, the Secretary, addressed the Board expressing their concerns over the layout of the new traffic lights at this intersection and their concern that the proposed arrangements were hazardous, especially to children, the elderly and the disabled.

The Traffic Engineer, Major Roads and Transport Improvements, Brian Neill, undertook to investigate these concerns carefully and to come back to the Board on this matter. In addition the Board had agreed to invite Mr Murray and Mrs Weeks to attend the Seminar Meeting of the Board to discuss ways of making life easier for blind and disabled persons. Mr Stephen Barker of the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind was also invited to attend.

In the discussion at the Seminar Meeting, Mr Murray referred to issues of pedestrian safety, emphasising that the ability of pedestrians to move around safely affected not just the blind but the whole spectrum of society. He submitted that some Council decisions are costly and, he believed, ineffective. New technology often did not fit the needs of the disabled. Mr Murray believed that the Council needed to seek practical solutions to assist those who were disabled and in particular the blind.

Mr Barker addressed the meeting emphasising that mobility for the blind and disabled was a matter of safe, independent and dignified travel.

In the discussions which took place, the following points were raised:

1. The design of crossing facilities is important to ensure their availability for all road users. This includes zebra crossings and traffic light controlled crossings.
2. Blind persons always have to cross at a crossing. Therefore the patterns of intersections should be the same. Blind persons listen to traffic queues and the buzzers provided on some lights are a double check. Unfortunately, with some new buzzers you have to stand in a particular place to activate the buzzer and this is not always helpful.

3. Buzzer activation is often on the wrong side for those with guide dogs, who walk on the left. Electric scooters have the same problems. Crossing positions also pose problems. The ramped crossing points are often in a different position from the traffic light actuation pads and therefore cause a confused line of crossing.
4. The audible “cross” signals are often not loud enough. Unfortunately, retailers and residents often do not want loud buzzers.
5. It is often difficult to line up with the ramp at a crossing, especially for those with no dog.
6. Lack of time to cross is also a difficulty for the disabled.
7. Buzzers need to beep all the time to give a constant line of response. Speakers felt that the standards here in Christchurch are not as acceptable as those in other cities around the world.
8. Suggestions for improvements are often made but lack of money or other considerations result in these not being implemented.
9. Removal of pedestrian crossings and installation of median refuges makes crossing impossible for the disabled.
10. The Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind is developing some well designed and appropriate crossings. An education programme for both drivers and those seeking to use these crossings is needed.
11. Engineering solutions are possible but often do not get taken into account when planning is being done.
12. The Disabled Persons’ Assembly could also be consulted more with regard to producing engineering solutions suitable for disabled people.
13. Often there is no outcome from consultation which leads to frustrations.
14. Improvements carried out for the disabled also enhance safety for the whole community ie removal of overhanging branches and bushes and ensuring that street furniture and signs do not obstruct footpaths.

Considerable discussion with the Traffic Engineer arose as a result of the submissions made to the meeting.

It was suggested as a way of progressing this matter that a Seminar for all Community Boards be held in the future to discuss issues relating to pedestrian safety and the problems faced by the disabled.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the information be received.