

7. REPORT ON COMPACT WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

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The purpose of this report is to recommend a further process for progressing the Council's commitment to undertaking the development of a partnership agreement/compact with the voluntary and community sector in Christchurch.

CONTEXT

There is a multifaceted inter-dependence between central government, local government and the voluntary sector. For example, the achievement of many of governments' desired outcomes in the social sector depends on the availability of a community sector willing and able to:

- (i) Respond appropriately to locally identified needs in order to avoid the need for more costly funded interventions at a later stage; and
- (ii) Deliver services efficiently on behalf of Government.

In addition, community organisations provide opportunities for learning and skill enhancement, engage communities in identifying and addressing local needs, play a vital role in promoting social justice and providing a voice for the disadvantaged, and facilitate the development of social capital and participatory democracy. The community sector in Canterbury is also involved in maintaining or improving the environment and protecting bio-diversity through land care groups, coast care groups and other initiatives.

At present there are a number of factors affecting the sustainability and capacity of the voluntary sector. The most notable factors are those associated with Government contracts and funding: the compliance costs; short-term and partial funding; complex, inconsistent and ad hoc approaches; circumscribed restrictions and limited outcome evaluation.

The Christchurch City Council has identified that over \$23,500,000 was funded to the voluntary sector in Christchurch from nine departments in 1997/98 (not including the HFA, the largest funder).¹ An estimated \$3.5M of this would have been spent on compliance costs and an additional \$2.4M would have been spent on transaction costs (over and above the \$23,500,000 allocated).

Government is increasingly looking to community sector organisations to deliver 'local solutions to local problems'. This requires a strong and sustainable sector. However, the Government's current policies and processes are compromising the community and voluntary sector's capacity.

¹ The HFA were unable to distinguish between voluntary sector and private providers but for the period 1 November 1998 to 30 April 1999 \$331,482,362 was paid to Christchurch private and voluntary organisations.

COUNCIL'S PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Council has for some time recognised the critical role played by the voluntary and community sector in the city. It has acknowledged that an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the social and political well-being of Christchurch. The Council has also been looking at ways to implement the principles of community governance. These principles identify that the Council has key roles in empowering their communities and recognising and enabling the contribution of the voluntary sector.

Last year the Committee agreed that investigating the establishment of an agreement/compact is a positive initiative which will clarify and facilitate the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED AGREEMENT WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Prior to the election the Labour Party indicated it was interested in developing an agreement with the voluntary sector social service organisations. It proposed to develop this agreement in partnership with the sector by undertaking a process of consultation.

“To provide a framework for government and the community sector to work together Labour proposes to develop an agreement between government and voluntary social service organisations to facilitate and guide our relationship. The intent of such an agreement is the promotion of talking, listening and co-operation at every level and to recognise that each play complimentary roles in the development and provision of social policy and services. (Labour Policy 1999)”

Over the last month the Government has formed a Unit in the Ministry of Social Policy and has initiated work on the development of a relationship agreement with the voluntary sector.

Government has recently agreed to the establishment of a joint working party to consider and consult on the scope and development process for reaching its agreement or agreement framework between Government and the community and voluntary sector.

The Hon Steve Maharey, the Minister responsible for the community and voluntary sector, is currently consulting with his colleagues concerning an appropriate person to take on the role of independent chair of the working group. It is expected the Minister will announce the Chair as soon as possible after Easter, using that opportunity to call for nominations for the community and voluntary sector representatives on the Working Group. At this point it is anticipated that the Working Group will comprise ten members and will include both Maori and Pacific people's representation, as well as Government and general community and voluntary sector representatives.

DISCUSSION

The Christchurch City Council is currently in the forefront of local government initiatives in this area. It is important that the Council's initiative is co-ordinated with any national process. For example, there is the possibility of developing a local agreement that included central government, local government and the voluntary sector. This would allow a holistic response to local issues.

Central government appears to be working with national representatives of national voluntary sector organisations. It is therefore possible that the local voice and the role of smaller, locally-based voluntary organisations could be overlooked in a national agreement. The Council has a potential role in facilitating local input into the national agreement and ensuring that small local groups are not overlooked.

We are planning to hold a local community forum on 22 June 2000 to discuss a possible agreement with local community groups. This will be the first in a series of such forums. Through these forums we hope to facilitate a process through which the local voluntary sector can discuss the potential relationship agreement and formulate its own processes to further enhance the strength of the sector.

It is also important that the Council and Community Boards are clear about how they envisage a partnership relationship working, including what they can contribute and how they can benefit from such relationship.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Committee note the process for developing the agreement.
 2. That the Committee ensure that representatives of the Committee attend the local forum in June 2000.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council continue to collaborate with Central Government in the development of agreements with the voluntary sector.
 2. That the views of local organisations being incorporated in such agreements be encouraged.