

9. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR WORKING PARTY

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the report of the Government's Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party (CVS) and to recommend an appropriate Council response.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a brief summary of the report of the CVS Working Party regarding the proposed agreement between government and Iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations.

Since the release of the report, Mayor Gary Moore has met with the Hon Steve Maharey and discussed an appropriate Council response. Outlined below is a response from the Council based on those discussions and the Working Party's report.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting in July 1999, the Committee agreed to investigate the establishment of a Compact as a positive initiative which would clarify and facilitate the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector. At its meeting in August 1999, the Committee endorsed working with the voluntary social service sector to determine what sort of relationship it would like to have with the Council and whether a compact would be beneficial.

Later that year the new Labour-Alliance Government indicated that it was interested in developing an agreement with voluntary sector social service organisations at a national level to *"provide a framework for government and the community sector to work together"*

The Government established the CVS Working Party to consider "the scope of a proposed agreement between government and Iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations".

The Council agreed that, rather than duplicate effort, it was best to co-ordinate with any national activities and, where appropriate, facilitate a local consultation processes to feed into the national process. The Council also advocated for local government inclusion in the Working Group. It argued that the agreement should not be just a two-way agreement between central government and the voluntary sector, but a comprehensive agreement between local government, central government, Iwi/Maori and community and voluntary organisations, reflecting the benefits of collaboration between different agencies, groups and sectors.

THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR WORKING PARTY REPORT

The Working Party reported its findings and recommendations to government on 19 April 2001. The Working Party was chaired by Dorothy Wilson, a former Deputy Mayor of Waitakere City. It had eight community/Maori representatives and three government representatives. Jenny Smith, a senior community worker with the Christchurch City Mission, was one of the community representatives.

The Working Party focused on gaining a better understanding of the nature of the community sector and its issues as a means of improving relations between the sector and government. It developed its views through:

- An outreach programme sampling the views of community organisations
- Liaison with a government sector officials' reference group
- Considering written submissions
- Considering relevant existing research and data

The Christchurch City Council assisted with this process through organising workshops and meetings, and supplying relevant information to the Working Party.

The Working Party believes that a vibrant and responsive community sector is an essential element of a strong civil society. It identified that more than a decade of economic and state sector reform has left many in iwi and community organisations mistrustful of government and feeling undervalued and disempowered. The Working Party identified that much of the deep feeling and frustration expressed arose from this experience and did not necessarily reflect views on the fresh approaches initiated by the current Government. However, it argued that the process of relationship-building could not move on without acknowledging the depth of frustration and resentment amongst many people active in iwi and community organisations.

The Working Party concluded there were five significant issues to resolve in progressing the relationship between government and the community sector:

- Concerns about the relationship between the Crown and iwi, characterised by the desire of Maori for self-determination and control over their resources. Lack of resolution of Treaty-based issues was perceived to be a barrier to improving relationships between government and the community sector.
- A sense of having been excluded from key policy decisions and a desire for a more participatory style of government. For example, the distancing of government from communities and the complexities of modern public administrative systems, heightened by aspects of the state sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.
- Frustration with government funding arrangements and, in particular, opposition to the 'contracting model' at all levels and across a wide range of organisations.
- A concern about the 'health' and strength of iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations and their capacity to pursue their goals.
- A more general concern about the 'culture of government' — the attitudes and behaviour of government agencies and officials and their lack of understanding of iwi and the community sector.

The report attempts to identify ways to overcome these issues and move forward to a relationship based on mutual respect. The Working Party identified the following key areas to focus on:

- **Improving relations between Iwi/Maori and the Crown**
It is not sufficient for government to engage with Iwi/Maori and their organisations primarily as 'community groups'. Together with the Crown they are Treaty partners and expect this relationship to be recognised.
- **The need for participatory democracy**
Developing a more inclusive approach to decision-making is critical to the process of 'democratising democracy'. This requires access to information, timeframes that enable people to consider options, people who can facilitate and negotiate, and who have cultural and local knowledge and leadership within government and within the community.
- **Reviewing resourcing and accountability arrangements**
A need for a substantial change in funding delivery practice and underlying relationships, including review of the complexity of compliance costs, piecemeal and partial approaches to funding, tendering processes and accountability requirements.
- **Strengthening the community sector**
A need to invest in developing infrastructure and skills and umbrella national and strategic groups across the sector.
- **Improving the capacity of central government to understand and work with community organisations**
A need for government to "change the way it does business".

WORKING PARTY'S RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

The Working Party suggests that there is not yet sufficient coherence across the breadth of the community sector to support a formal agreement between government and Iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations. However, it believes that there is work that could be done to develop a "robust and respectful framework for relationships".

It considers that the broader concerns of Maori should be addressed as a government-wide process led by the establishment of a high level, highly mandated body such as a Treaty of Waitangi Commission.

The Working Party proposed several immediate actions to “jump-start” the work of rebuilding the relationship between government and the community sector:

- A Statement of Intent by the current Government, providing a clear commitment to building the relationship. This would set out the principles and values on which government agency attitudes and behaviour should be based.

A second phase programme of relationship-building comprising four strands:

- Developing participatory democracy
- Reviewing resourcing and accountability arrangements (including developing good practice models and monitoring and advising on process improvements)
- Strengthening the community sector
- Improving the ability of central government to understand and work with community organisations

The Working Party also recommended that Phase Two of the relationship-building work programme should include a strategy to ensure that local government is involved, through a Steering Group and working groups, in specific projects and in any community consultation and engagement programme.

RESPONSE FROM COUNCIL

An appropriate response from the Council is one which is consistent with the Working Party’s Report and with earlier Council resolutions. It is important to move forward and create a more positive environment and facilitate synergies between sectors, agencies, Maori, local and central government.

Statement of Intent

It is proposed that the Council develop a Statement of Intent (or Protocol) regarding its relationship with the voluntary sector, as initially suggested by the Mayor. A Statement of Intent would be an expression of the Council’s commitment to work with the voluntary sector for the betterment of society, to nurture and support voluntary activity, and to jointly influence national policy where appropriate. The underlying philosophy behind this proposal for a Statement of Intent is that the voluntary sector is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive and prosperous society. Voluntary groups, as independent, not-for-profit organisations, bring distinctive value to Christchurch and fulfil a role that is distinct from both the state and the market.

A draft Statement, based on discussion with local voluntary sector groups during the consultation regarding a Compact, is attached for consideration.

Formal Agreements

The Council should continue to develop specific agreements (such as Memoranda of Understanding) with government agencies, Maori and community agencies where appropriate. It is currently discussing such agreements with some community sector and government agencies.

Agreements are more appropriate where there are specific projects, synergies or protocols as opposed to a sector-wide compact, but they would benefit from an umbrella Statement of Intent.

Other Activity

Although there is room for improvement, the Council is already pro-active in addressing many of the issues and suggestions in the CVS Working Party Report. For example:

- The Council has recently developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ngai Tahu.
- The Council is working with other funders to develop and share good practice models of funding between central and local government funders. This work, originally an initiative from the community sector, is progressing through the Collaborative Funders’ Group and has been previously reported to the Council. The Council is working with other agencies to develop locally-based training and capacity building. For example, Council is collaborating with the Child Youth and Family Capacity Building Project to co-ordinate a training/information forum, and Advocacy Teams are also active in this area.
- The Council actively seeks to engage the voluntary sector in programme and policy development and implementation. For example, it is working with COSS and the Community Law Centre to facilitate workshops for voluntary agencies to have input into the Annual Plan Process. It has a Seeking Community Views Policy in place to guide consultation on programme and policy development.

It is suggested that the Council continue to develop and improve these processes and functions under the umbrella of a Statement of Intent.

STRATEGIC FIT WITH COUNCIL'S OBJECTIVES AND ROLES

The responses suggested in this report align with key Council policies, including the Social Well-being Policy, the Community Policy and the Seeking Community Views Policy. For example, the Social Well-being Policy has identified key priorities of:

- Engaging citizens and communities in decision-making and policy implementation
- Supporting the community infrastructure which provide opportunities to participate in community life and have a sense of belonging and identity

The Community Policy has an objective of:

- Building coalitions with and between community groups and other agencies

The Council's Strategic Plan identifies a desire to:

- Facilitate collaboration between public, private and community agencies
- Work with community groups, government agencies and other funding bodies to address key areas of social need

The initiative also aligns with Council's emphasis on Community Governance.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Committee receive the information regarding the Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party report.
 2. That the Committee recommend to the Council a Statement of Intent as an expression of the commitment of the Council to work with the voluntary sector (a draft is attached for consideration).
 3. That the Committee seek feedback from the voluntary sector regarding the draft Statement of Intent.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.