

18. AVEBURY HOUSE UPDATE

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| Officer responsible Community Advocate | Author Lynnette Ebborn, Community Development Advisor, DDI372-2605 |
| Corporate Plan Output: | |

The purpose of this report is to inform the new Community Board members on the Avebury House Community Development Project and to report on the progress of this project up to November 2001.

POLICY LINKS

Social Well Being Policy – meets 8 of 9 priorities

Community Policy – meets 7 of the 9 priorities

Community Relations Unit Strategic Objectives

BACKGROUND

Avebury House is situated in Eveleyn Couzins Ave, Richmond and is owned by the Christchurch City Council.

Since 1999 there has been a lot of discussion around the use of Avebury House.

Research was done in 1999 by Sue Dewes exploring the idea of Avebury being used by the community as an arts and cultural centre.

In April 2000 the City Councils Projects and Properties Committee and Council set the house aside very definitely for community use. The Property Unit has set aside \$500,000 over two years for the refurbishment of the property. Considering the historical nature of the building and the extent of the work needed this covers the basic needs. For example because of the heritage nature of the building it requires a costly sprinkler system.

There was a pause in the process in 2000 as both the Community Development Adviser and the Community Advocate were newly appointed and had to take on board many issues around the process including the fact that although there was money for refurbishing, there was no budget for anything else.

In May 2001 a report commissioned by the Hagley/Ferrymead Advocacy Team (Avebury House – A Community Facility. McMillan 2001) identified the need for a community worker to be present at the house for it to become a going concern. With this in mind the Advocacy Team contracted for six months a community development worker (Lesley McMillan) to:

- Contact the local community
- Signal a presence in the building
- Ascertain what it is that the community actually want the house used for
- Begin a process that would culminate in the setting up of a legal entity, possibly a trust, and a management committee for the Avebury House Community Development Project

As part of the above processes two public meetings were held at the house on 4 September 2001 and 17th October 2001. At the September meeting over thirty people attended and 13 of those put their names down as being interested in either being on the management committee or being involved in some kind of voluntary work within the house. Similar numbers attended the second meeting.

Fifty-three people have been to visit the house while the community worker has been present there on Wednesdays. Seventy-eight people have been personally interviewed by the community worker. In total twenty-eight people have put their names down for future involvement and approximately ten are interested in being on the management committee.

It was acknowledged that the Council had taken a very positive step and because of this the community were prepared to be involved as long as the Council did not leave them in the lurch. It was seen that the “occupation” of the house would go a long way to alleviate the fears of the local residents regarding vandalism. Vandalism has, in fact, decreased since the Community Development Worker has been present.

The desire to use the house as somewhere ‘special’ has arisen from the public meeting and the work that the community development worker has done. It was seen as being able to be used more widely than “Arts and Culture”.

It was perceived that the trust may eventually be able to let some of the larger rooms out for weddings and seminars thus developing an income whilst allowing the house to be used by the community for a wide variety of activities such as music practice and instruction, yoga, pottery, the development of self catering facilities and possibly a low cost café and all manner of activities.

There will therefore be costs over and above the costs of meeting building requirements regarding health and safety and general basic refurbishment for example sound proofing of two rooms for music purposes, providing a kitchen that is more than the basic zip and sink.

COMMUNITY ENERGY

There has been quite a display of community energy for this project. At present we have had two meetings with a core group of people who are prepared to put time and energy into the house. They are at present deciding whether they should set up as a Charitable Trust or an Incorporated Society. Hopefully this group will be legally constituted by January 2002. This means they will be able to source funding from appropriate sources.

The community boards that border the area were all in favour of the house being used for the community and indicated this to the council when decisions about the house were being made. It would be beneficial if the three boards who represent the area that Avebury house draws from could meet to discuss future strategies for resourcing Avebury House.

FURTHER REPORTING

The Community Development worker at Avebury will be preparing and presenting a report to the Community Board in January 2002. It would be appropriate that this also occur with the Burwood/Pegasus and Shirley/Papanui Community Boards

- Recommendation:**
1. That a seminar meeting be set up between the Hagley/Ferrymead, Shirley/Papanui and Burwood/Pegasus community boards before the end of 2001 to discuss the Avebury House Community Development Project.
 2. That the Community Development Worker from the Avebury House Community Development Project be invited to attend this meeting.