

3. FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

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I facilitated an "Anticipation Dialogues" session at the Committee's seminar meeting held on 7 March 2002. The purpose of the session was to provide a way of seeing whether or not there are any "big picture" outcomes which are being overlooked because of our approach of focusing on the process of consultation around specific significant activities such as parks and streets.

Councillors will recall that participants were divided into three groups, representing citizens, elected members and staff, and asked to paint a word picture of how we would recognise successful consultation practices in three-five years' time.

The three "word pictures" are presented below:

CITIZENS' VIEW

- Citizens feel informed, with access to general information and to project-specific information, (e-Communication).
- We are really interested in Christchurch (our city). We have developed a sense of "community". We like living in our neighbourhood and in the city.
- There is a high level of participation. The democratic process is expanded. Voter turn-out is higher.
- Council projects are integrated to avoid duplication.
- Citizens are satisfied that rates are being spent in an efficient way.
- There is a high level of trust because we have input to the processes. We are part of the dialogue. We are being listened to which has then given rise to action. This action has been communicated back.
- Staff work for and with me as a ratepayer. There is good communication and follow up.
- There are very clear lines of communication.
- Roles of elected members/staff/citizens are clearly defined and understood.
- There is open dialogue between Council, Citizens, Staff ... importantly, face-to-face.
- We engage on the things that are important.
- Council has a big Web presence and is able to "push out" newsletters about what's happening.
- There is good two-way communication, it feels "almost like referenda" ... elected members decisions are based on a leadership role with good communications to support this ... they can obtain quick snapshots of community views e.g. through Listservs
- We are able to influence Central Government at the local level.
- The digital divide is overcome ... while Council is still communicating through print media and networking through residents groups ... "cybercafes" and other initiatives with origins such as Addington Net enable widespread access, including Digital TV with free access/broadcast arrangements.
- We know our communities with staff and elected members listening and understanding us.

ELECTED MEMBERS' VIEW

- We have job descriptions focused on our role as elected members to do with policy and engagement ...both Councillors and Community Board members ...things have been clarified and written down.
- There are no 'night' meetings.
- There are fewer Councillors, perhaps only 12.
- The community know who to contact for what, so we don't get involved in the detail of service delivery. We have a shared vision focused on outcomes...we understand our collective responsibility and role...this greater clarity enables more collaborative working.
- There is more engagement with citizens who can select the right information they want to enable this.
- There are fewer Committees and more full Council meetings/Community Board meetings.
- We spend less time in meetings and more time in engaging and facilitating...we are in one sense "tools for Community Advocates".
- Community Advocates work to set a good scene for Community Boards... Councillors keep Community Boards well informed.
- We seek children's and other viewpoints.

STAFF VIEW

- A code of Conduct for elected members helps our relationship with them.
- There is transparency of our decision-making processes.
- We are approachable and consistent in our communications... people feel part of the process.
- There is a clear vision understood by staff and elected members which is simple and widely understood• There is good staff morale and culture...the people who work here are committed to the Council and Christchurch.
- There is trust with the community through staff consistency in response/approach.
- We are a single organisation, not 'silos'.
- Staff honour their word on response times and communicate clear expectations about this.
- We value input from citizens.
- There is changed culture and morale ... we talk about the good things.

SUMMARY

Some of the key themes which emerge include:

- Citizens feel well informed about Council activities, not just decision-making processes.
- Much information is available electronically, but face-to-face opportunities are also evident.
- There is clarity as to expectations in consultation.
- There is clarity as to roles and clear communication lines with staff for the public to have service delivery concerns addressed.
- Greater use is made of ways for gaps within the community to inform Council's "agenda" (ie initiation of communication is two-way).

Recommendation: That the Committee continue to look at:

1. Ways of making information on Council activities and decision-making available in accessible and targeted ways, especially by using electronic means.
2. Clarifying expectations of the public in the various types of consultation process.
3. Techniques for the community to initiate issues for discussion with Community Boards/Council.

Chairman's

Recommendation: Not seen by Chairman.