

12. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – LYTTELTON URBAN DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of this report is to provide background information to enable the Board to decide how and when to proceed with the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee

In April 2011, the Board's consultation with the Lyttelton community about earthquake recovery highlighted a high level of community interest and concern about urban design matters. *"A plan for the renewal of Lyttelton Town Centre developed with genuine community participation, and incorporating many of the suggestions made"* was a key recommendation in the Lyttelton Community Recovery Plan, and *"Establishment of a Lyttelton Design and Advisory Committee to review resource consent applications"* was also recommended to support heritage and town character and associated economic recovery (Pages 13 and 19, Lyttelton Community Recovery Plan)

The idea for a Lyttelton Design and Advisory Committee was based on the long-standing Akaroa Design and Appearance Advisory Committee which is a formally established committee of the Akaroa-Wairewa Community Board. It is made up of community members, Board members and professional advisers (consultants). The Committee meets monthly, and the meetings are advertised and open to the public. The Committee is supported by the Community Board Adviser, the Secretarial Services Officer and a Council planner. The consultants who provide advice to the committee can claim for the time spent attending the meeting at a rate of \$150 per meeting plus mileage expenses.

Resource consent applications for new buildings (and significant alterations to existing buildings) are referred to the committee which considers the design and appearance aspects of the proposal in terms of the Akaroa Design Guidelines. It also considers such matters as effects on the streetscape and how well the proposal fits with the town's character. Amendments are often suggested to the applicant(s). While there is no compulsion for the applicant to follow the committee's recommendations and amend the proposed design, planning staff do take account of the Committee's comments when considering the resource consent application. Consent applications with Design and Appearance Advisory Committee approval generally move through the consent process more smoothly, are more likely to be approved, and with fewer conditions. There are benefits for the applicant.

Earlier in 2011 Board members were briefed by staff planner Kent Wilson with information about both the Akaroa committee and the Christchurch Urban Design Panel which considers resource consent applications in the central city. The Board considered the pros and cons of each model and reached a consensus that the Akaroa model was best suited to Lyttelton because of:

- Its greater level of community involvement,
- Its ability to blend detailed local knowledge with design expertise,
- Its transparent processes and
- A greater degree of community ownership and autonomy.

The Board concluded that over time greater local involvement is likely to result in a town character which is a closer expression of local cultural values and the finer details of the underlying environment.

Draft Lyttelton Master Plan

The Lyttelton Community Recovery Plan has been widely circulated and was apparently well received by Council's elected members. It was used by consultants and staff as a starting point for the Lyttelton Master Plan process. Early internal drafts of the master plan picked up on the Board's recommendation, incorporating as action:

B3 Lyttelton Design and Advisory Panel to *"Consider the establishment of a local design advisory panel or other pre-application assessment/advice mechanisms to give input on town centre development. Within the community there is a body of local independent built environment professionals who can help ensure high quality development that is appropriate for the context and is aligned with the objectives of this vision"* (Draft 29/7/2011 Page 23).

However in the draft which went to Christchurch City Council for approval on 27 October, and which has been released for public comment action B3 was changed to:

B3 Inclusion of local involvement in the existing Urban Design Panel with the comment *“Provide for the inclusion of appropriately qualified local design professionals in the already established Christchurch Urban Design Panel to provide local input into town centre redevelopment and rebuilding, preferably at the pre-application assessment and advice stage. This does not preclude a design advisory panel being established by the Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board.”*

While the amended action B3 may “not preclude” the Board establishing a committee having both would probably create a pointless replication, and yet another step in the process for consent applicants.

Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee

Establishment of the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee is considered to be a recovery matter by the Board which sees it as important the committee is up and running before the rebuild starts in earnest, especially in the commercial area. While there have been a number of applications for temporary activities, no resource consent applications for new commercial buildings in Lyttelton have been lodged (elected members intranet resource consent lists as at 13 November 2011) This may be because of insurance issues or could be because owners of commercial properties are waiting for rules in the district plan to change before submitting applications. Once these hurdles are overcome it is expected applications will be lodged with increasing frequency.

At its meeting on 18 October 2011 the Board agreed *“to establish a Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee comprised of three consultants, two community representatives, one Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board member and the chairperson of the Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board as ex officio member.”*

It was also agreed the Board would seek registrations of interest from suitably qualified people who may wish to be members of the committee.

Resourcing the Committees

The Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee needs to be resourced in three ways:

- (a) Staff support for meeting administration and advice,
- (b) Planning staff to prepare reports and attend meetings,
- (c) Funding for the remuneration of independent professional advisers.

Other Community Boards have committees which are supported by Democracy Services staff. These include Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board which has two committees (Community Finance and Planning Committee and Works Traffic and Environment Committee), Riccarton/Wigram Community Board which has three (Community Services Committee, Transport and Greenspace Committee and Regulatory and Planning Committee) as well as the Akaroa/Wairewa Community Board's Akaroa Design and Advisory Committee and Akaroa Museum Advisory Committee. All of these Community Board committees are also provided with technical staff reports and advice.

We might expect these two aspects of the resourcing required for the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee would be met by the Council, though this is not yet clear. However there is still the question of remuneration for the independent consultants on the committee.

The Board's initial plan was to advertise for registrations of interest making it clear that professional involvement would need to be on a pro bono basis, at least to begin with. During informal discussions with the Mayor, Chief Executive and Councillors on 10 November when the Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board's 18 October minutes were considered by Council, it was made clear there is unlikely to be funding to pay design professionals on the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee.

The Board now needs to consider whether there is a risk the lack of payment would limit the pool of people from which it can select committee members (and a possible consequential effect on the quality of the professional advice provided to the committee), and if so, whether it may need to consider using its Discretionary Response Fund to pay the consultants or look outside the council to other funding sources.

At its meeting on 24 November, Christchurch City Council considered a report on the Urban Design Panel which signalled a review of *“the number, composition, or scope of panels that may arise as a result of the Central City Plan and Suburban Masterplanning exercises.”* A more comprehensive report is in preparation. *“It is considered more appropriate that this more holistic report be considered in the New Year once the Minister’s decision on the Central City Plan is known and once consultation has been completed on at least the first four Suburban Masterplans.”* (Item 25, p293, CCC agenda 24 November 2011, clause 1).

Staff recommended an expansion of the available pool of panellists from 18 to 24, and an increase in the rate paid to consultants serving on the Urban Design Panel from \$150/hour to \$180/hour.” It was *“expected these costs can be met within existing operational budgets”* (clause 10).

At this new rate the full cost of independent professional advice to the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee is likely to be of the order of \$12,000 per year:

$$3 \text{ consultants} \times 2 \text{ hours each per month} \times 11 \text{ months} \times \$180 = \$11,880$$

How to proceed?

The Board now needs to consider if, when and how it wishes to proceed. Options include:

- (a) Do nothing.
- (b) Wait until the submissions on the draft Lyttelton Master Plan have closed and see what submissions say on the matter, then decide whether to proceed with the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee early in the new year.
- (c) Wait until the more comprehensive Council staff report on the Urban Design Panel and other panels which may arise as a result of the four suburban master plans is available about June next year and then decide whether to proceed with the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee.
- (d) Proceed with getting the Lyttelton Urban Design Advisory Committee up and running as soon as practicable, then review its value and operations at the time of the Council review report expected about June next year.

If the Board favours option (d) members may wish to consider the draft terms of reference as **attached**.