

25. CONSULTATION CLOSING DATES - DRAFT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND DRAFT SOCIAL HOUSING STRATEGY

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to consider altering the closing dates for consultation on the Draft Community Development Strategy (incorporating the review of community groups grants and the community facilities plan), the Draft Social Housing Strategy and the Ageing Together Policy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Council has been receiving complaints about the timeframe for consultation on the Draft Community Development Strategy and Draft Social Housing Strategy in the lead up to Christmas.
3. This is being exacerbated by other consultations taking place at the same time, including the Urban Development Strategy and Ageing Together Policy.
4. Councillors requested a report on the potential to extend the consultation periods for the Community Development Strategy and the Social Housing Strategy.
5. There are several steps in the process to complete a strategy that have to be completed once the consultation on the draft document has closed. It is important that the Council gives due consideration to the views expressed in the consultation.
6. Extending the consultation periods until the end of February 2007 will take the pressure off community groups and ensure they are able to participate fully in the process.
7. It is not possible to extend the closing date for consultation for the Community Development Strategy to the end of February 2007 **and** implement the new grant schemes emanating from it in time for the Council to make funding decisions in July 2007. Extending the consultation period to the end of February will mean that implementation of the new grants schemes will have to wait until the 2008/9 year to be implemented.
8. Whilst potential anxiety amongst Council tenants from an extended consultation period will need to be well managed, extending the consultation period for the Social Housing Strategy to the end of February could be reasonably achieved.
9. Similarly the consultation period for the Ageing Together Policy could be reasonably extended to the end of February 2007.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

10. The Local Government Act 2002 provides clear requirements and processes for the Council to ensure the views of interested and affected parties are considered in its decision making. The Local Government Act also allows for the processes to be adapted to differing circumstances as determined appropriate by the Council.
11. The major financial consideration is that if the process to complete the Community Development Strategy is delayed it may impact on the ability of the Council to realise the savings in the community facilities area signalled in the LTCCP.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Retain the existing consultation period for the Community Development Strategy ending on 22 December 2006 to enable the new grants schemes emanating from it to be implemented in time for grants decisions to be made in July 2007.
- (b) Extend the consultation periods for both the Social Housing Strategy and the Ageing Together Policy to 28 February 2007.

BACKGROUND ON CONSULTATION CLOSING DATES - DRAFT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND DRAFT SOCIAL HOUSING STRATEGY

12. Work has been carried out throughout 2006 on the development of both the Draft Community Development and Social Housing Strategy. In the case of the Social Housing Strategy there has been significant engagement with other providers and stakeholder agencies. In the case of the Community Development Strategy engagement has been through an external reference group of community organisations and government agencies. This group represents a cross section but relatively small proportion of the overall organisations interested in the strategy (and/or the community group grants review and the facilities plan).
13. The Council approved both the Draft Community Development Strategy and Draft Social Housing Strategy at its meeting on 2 November 2006. Since that time work has been carried out to create, print and circulate the documents for consideration and comment. Presentations on the strategies have already been made at a number of meetings and forums.
14. Currently the closing date for consultation on both strategies is 22 December 2006.
15. There are a number of other significant strategy/policy documents also out for consultation in this period:

Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy Closing date 22 December 2006
Ageing Together Policy Closing date 27 January 2007

16. This report is written in response to concerns raised with elected members about the number of consultations taking place simultaneously in the lead up to Christmas. The feedback received is that many community groups in particular only meet for pre-Christmas celebrations if at all during December and consequently their ability to respond to the consultations is limited.
17. The current timeline for the completion of the Community Development Strategy is as follows:

Consultation closes	22 December 2006
Analysis of submissions received and consideration of changes to strategy	22 December - 20 February 2007
Council seminar on feedback received and consideration of changes to strategy	20 February 2007
Council agenda closes for final strategy	1 March 2007
Final strategy submitted to Council meeting for approval	15 March 2007

Following completion of the strategy, grant application forms and publicity material will be prepared in April with the new grant schemes advertised on 1 May 2007.

18. The current timeline for completion of the Social Housing Strategy is as follows:

Consultation closes	22 December 2006
Analysis of submissions received and consideration of changes to strategy	22 December - 13 February 2007
Council seminar on feedback received and consideration of changes to strategy	13 February 2007
Council agenda closes for final strategy	22 February 2007
Final strategy submitted to Council meeting for approval	8 March 2007

19. Once the consultation period has closed the following processes have to be completed:
- Consultation feedback received entered in to database (typically this will take place throughout the consultation period, however there is normally a last minute rush of submissions)
 - Analysis and consideration of the submissions made
 - Consideration of changes to the draft strategies based on the feedback received. Depending on the feedback received this could range from minor change or fundamental shift.
 - The feedback received and potential changes to the strategy are discussed with councillors informally at a seminar
 - The final strategy and associated report prepared and submitted to a Council meeting for approval.
 - Council considers the final strategy
20. In order to implement the grants schemes the following processes need to take place once the final strategy is approved:
- Grants application forms and publicity material need to be prepared, printed and distributed.
 - The new funding schemes need to be advertised.
 - Advice needs to be provided to potential applications around the new schemes and processes.
 - Applications need to be received, analysed and researched to enable staff to make informed recommendations.
 - Material needs to be prepared for and distributed to the Metropolitan Funding Sub Committee.
 - Funding decisions need to be made by the Metropolitan Funding Sub Committee.
21. If the closing dates for consultation are to be extended, it would seem that they should be extended well in to February 2007 at least as many community organisations do not meet in January due to the holiday period. Ideally the consultation deadlines should be extended to the end of February.

Community Development Strategy

22. Using an end of February closing date for consultation, the timeline to complete the Community Development Strategy and implement the grants schemes with funding decisions in July 2007 is as follows:

Consultation Closing Date End February 2007

Analysis of Submissions and Considering Changes to Strategy	Council Decision	Prepare Application forms and materials	Advertise Grant Schemes
March <i>(Final strategy and report due on Council agenda mid March)</i>	Start April	Rest of April	Start May

23. By making compromises in the process to finalise the strategy it could be compressed. Staff could devote their time exclusively to this work once the consultation has closed, input from the Strong Communities Portfolio Group could be skipped, no opportunity for community boards to directly present their feedback to Council (something they have indicated a desire to do) could be provided and no seminar undertaken with Council to consider the feedback received and potential changes to the strategy in an informal manner. Effectively councillors would be presented with a proposed final strategy at a Council meeting with the option to either adopt it or ask staff to make revisions and present it at a subsequent meeting. This is a high risk process given the lack of councillor input into the final strategy development. There is a danger that councillors are not prepared to approve the final document when presented with resulting delays which mean that the new grant schemes cannot be implemented for decisions in July 2007.

24. Even making compromises to the process with a consultation closing date at the end of February it will be impossible to give adequate consideration to the submissions made and propose well considered alterations to the strategy in the two week period required to enable implementation of the new grant schemes for decisions in July. If the Council is of a mind to extend the consultation period to the end of February 2007, it will not be possible to implement the new grant schemes in time for the 2007/8 year. Rather the existing grant schemes will have to be retained for a further year.

Social Housing Strategy

- 25.. Staff are unclear as to what complaints elected members have received about the consultation period for the Social Housing Strategy specifically. A number of presentations have been given to meetings and forums on the Draft Social Housing Strategy and at these the length of the consultation has not been an issue. Indeed some stakeholders have indicated their desire for the Council to complete the strategy as soon as possible so that they can start working with the Council on aspects of its implementation. However the length of consultation on the Social Housing Strategy has been raised as a concern at some of the forums to discuss the Community Development Strategy.
26. Whilst potential anxiety amongst Council tenants from an extended consultation period will need to be well managed, the consequences of extending the consultation period for this work are less severe.

Ageing Together Policy

The consultation period for the Ageing Together Policy could also be extended without creating major difficulties. Such an action may cause some irritation for those who have been closely involved in its development e.g. the reference group. It may also send the signal that the Council views this work as a lower priority. In the circumstances however this may be acceptable to the Council.

OPTIONS

Community Development Strategy

27. Retain the closing date for consultation at 22 December 2006 and implement the new grant schemes in time for grants decisions to be made in July 2007.
28. Extend the consultation period to the end of February 2007 and delay implementation of the new grant schemes until the 2008/9 year.

Social Housing Strategy

29. Retain the closing date for consultation at 22 December 2006.
30. Extend the consultation period to the end of February 2007.

Ageing Together Policy

31. Retain the closing date for consultation at 27 January 2007
32. Extend the consultation period to the end of February 2007.

PREFERRED OPTION

33. That the consultation period for the Community Development Strategy closes on 22 December 2006 to enable the new grants schemes emanating from it to be implemented in time for grants decisions to be made in July 2007.

That the consultation periods for both the Social Housing Strategy and the Ageing Together policy be extended to the 28 February 2007.