

April 12, 2009

Draft Long term Community Plan (LTCCP) 2009 – 19

Submission: Pioneer Early Learning Centre

I wish to discuss the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Monday 11 May 2009 and Monday 18 May 2009. I am completing this submission for myself.

Dear People,

The latest LTCCP recommends that the operation of Pioneer Early Learning Centre be outsourced. I am writing to request that the status quo be maintained.

But first, I would like to sincerely thank the Christchurch City Council.

We discovered the wonderful resource that is Pioneer Early Learning Centre in our neighbourhood, purely by accident. What a Council initiative to be proud of it is! Dedicated and skilled professional staff, a well executed curriculum, a trustworthy environment and high quality care. All housed in a terrific purpose-built building adjacent to one of the best Leisure Centres in the South Island.

Additionally I would like to applaud the City Council for their forward thinking Early Childhood Policy (2001) which clearly outlines the objective (see page 8): *“To facilitate the provision of quality, accessible and affordable childcare services at Pioneer and QEII leisure facilities and within the inner city (for use by Council staff and other community users).”* The same Policy also outlines the desire to *“... improve the position of the least advantaged.”* Pioneer Early Learning Centre is placed in a multi-decile zone and as such is able to offer high quality affordable childcare – which embraces the Government 20-hours free Scheme – to many disadvantaged families. It’s great to see a commitment to these objectives being realized.

(The Early Childhood Policy (2001) is a robust current document and I look forward to being involved in the consultation process should it be considered for review.)

Aside from the objectives listed above - which could be compromised by outsourcing - why *should* the Christchurch City Council remain in the business of early learning for children?

Because as one of only 3 City Council owned and managed facilities, Pioneer Early Learning Centre is truly something the entire community can regard as an ongoing success story. After all, there is a long waiting list to enroll a child these days and with the recent price hike, the centers have become rates neutral. Although if there was ever a good reason to spend a tiny percentage of rate payers money, surely the care, education and growth of the city’s children - the ratepayers of the future - would be it.

While it may be true that no other City Council in New Zealand is involved in early learning – is that a good enough reason to abandon this sought after resource? Why not celebrate the difference and become a **leader!**

The casual childcare service provided to Pioneer Leisure Centre users alone is unique and a draw-card that could be further developed to expand the customer base and build on what is already a first class facility.

Most importantly the centre is regarded as a high quality provider of education and care rather than a ‘babysitting service’ and as such, I strongly urge you maintain the status quo at Pioneer Early Learning Centre.

Kind regards,



Beatrice Cheer