



2021 Council and Community Board team

A Voice for you – Democracy and Listening policy

One of Christchurch 2021's major commitments is providing a strong voice for the people of Christchurch in decision making. Consultation costs money and in order to get value for our rates dollar it is important Council gets it right.

The most obvious examples this term – where the Council headed off in the opposite direction to community views - have been Edgware Pool, roads through City Mall and the \$100m+ Council Palace. But these examples are symbolic of a wider and more fundamental problem.

A 2021 Council will fundamentally change the way Council engages with the people of Christchurch. Our consultation will be pro-active, genuine, and open and transparent.

The problems with the status quo

Decision making and listening

The past term of Council has been characterised by a growing sense that the community has not been listened to and that consultation has been about ticking boxes to approve pre-determined positions rather than genuine engagement.

Consultation happens too late in the process; submissions are asked for on pro forma questionnaires; in summaries for councillors submissions are given equal weight whether from one person or from many; Councillors rarely get to read original submissions.

This is not just a case of some people not liking the decisions. There will always be a variety of perspectives on any one issue – that is healthy in a democracy.

The Council's role is ensuring that the process is fair, that people have the information they need and have an opportunity to be heard.

Accessibility and Accountability

Currently the proceedings of the council are accessible through the published minutes of the Council. This record only shows how individual Councillors voted if a division is called, or if someone specifically requests that their vote in particular be recorded either as an abstention or as opposed.

The minutes are sole record of our elected council. This is in contrast to parliament where a record of the entire debate is recorded and now both audio and video recordings of the proceedings exist.

Central to a healthy democracy is an easily accessed voting record of elected members to ensure that elected representatives are democratically accountable.

The role of community boards

Many community board members, including some long-serving community board members, believe that their role has been sidelined in the last term of Community Boards often face long delays in getting information from Council, they lack staff support of implement decisions and are regularly excluded from Council decision-making

Relationships

Relationship's are crucial to a well functioning democracy. The current Council has allowed several crucial relationships to break down such as those with Maori, young people, ECan, and the community and voluntary sector. A narrow group of stakeholders are heard. A variety of voices are currently excluded from Council decision making because of broken relationships and reactive rather than pro-active engagement.

There is much potential for improved and strengthened relationships and co-operation with local MPs.

Christchurch 2021's promises and solutions

Decision making and listening

- 2021 will:
- Reaffirm Councillors representation role.
- Hold regular clinics in Council Service Centres. Many people comment that it far easier to see their local MP than their local Councillor. Councillors need the space and the opportunity to meet with their constituents.
- Return to standing committees which are under the leadership of a chairperson and are open to the public
- Follow the Council's "Decision Making Guidelines".
- Consult with key stakeholders early in the process before decisions are made.

Accessibility and Accountability

2021 will:

- Publish online the voting record of councillors and community board members (both by person and by issue) in an easily accessible format.
- Record the proceedings of council (initially in an audio format) and make these freely available for the media and the public via the council's website.
- Publish all research and consultation findings on the Councils website to demonstrate how consultation has influenced decision making and service delivery

The role of community boards

2021 will:

- We are committed to the place of community boards in the governance of the city and will seek to enhance their role
- Properly resource community boards and delegate local decision making to them
- Develop more locally focused mechanisms for consulting and engaging local people

Relationships

- 2021 will:
- Regular formal meetings with city MPs – sub committee for government MPs.
- Hold at least 3 formal joint meetings per year with ECan.
- Hold city-wide forums or meetings with other key sections of our community – youth, Maori, Pacific Island, Business, GLBTI, Multi-ethnic, Seniors, Residents Associations, the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- Consult in partnership with other organisations to avoid consultation fatigue. Partnerships are increasingly important in the delivery of seamless services across government and private sectors. It therefore makes sense that consultation should also be carried out in partnership with other key stakeholders.

Governance and Management

2021 will:

- Hold a training session with Staff and Councillors in public service governance and management immediately following the election.

Effective use of resources

2021 will:

- Ensure greater coordination between Council units, to reduce duplication, reduce over consultation of certain groups and identify those groups that are not being reached, as well as to use resources more effectively
- Development of e-participation initiatives