

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

18 MAY 2016

AGENDA ITEM E1 – APPENDIX 3

COMMUNITY BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Purpose of Report

For councillors to consider community board delegations.

Recommendations

Her Worship the Mayor recommends:

1. *That no changes be made to our current delegations to Community Boards due to the closeness of elections.*
2. *That this paper be referred to the incoming Council in October 2016 for consideration.*
3. *That any proposed new policies or changes to current South Wairarapa District Council policy be referred to the three Community Boards for input before being presented to the Policy and Finance Committee for adoption.*

1. Introduction

South Wairarapa District has three community boards (CB), Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough. They each represent a district electoral ward and have six members, four elected from the ward they represent and two appointed councillors. They were formed in the 1989 amalgamations of local authorities to ensure a voice for each town in our combined district council area. While in fact they are elected to represent the whole ward, they in practice focus on the township to a greater extent.

Over the years, representation reviews and anecdotal evidence has shown that people are divided on the value of community boards. Some voters who live in community board areas either do not think they provide effective representation or know little if anything about them. However, in our experience with community boards and discussion with the public, the value of community boards as a 'conduit to Council' is clear. The fact that they can be the voice of their particular town, with no need to regard a district wide approach, is undisputed.

It is also that very attribute that can however result in community boards being divisive and setting communities against Council. This is especially obvious in cases where Community Board members seem unclear as to their role. It is important that everyone understands 'what their job is'. Some see their community board as a mini council and this can be where expectations are not met.

There is no doubt that some community board members are working hard for their local communities with very positive relationships with council. It is the 'Council/Community Board on the same team' approach which achieves the most in the long run. It is, however, perfectly acceptable for a community board to challenge Council's thinking if it believes it is in its community's best interest to do so. The nature of that challenge should however be carefully considered as it could make or break the relationship and undermine the value of the board.

All these aspects need to be considered when deciding what roles, if any, the parent council should delegate to its community boards.

We also have small communities within our district that are far removed from any of our towns therefore have limited contact with the community board of their ward. These communities are self-organising and also working hard for their communities to provide the services they need. The role of these ad hoc groups should also be taken into account when divesting responsibilities.

It is important to note that although the role of community boards is defined in the Local Government Act, across New Zealand, no two are exactly the same. Community Boards in Christchurch have large budgets and many delegations including urban roading matters. Two of the most successful boards in New Zealand, Hasting's and Whanganui's Rural Community Boards have no budget and no delegations. South Wairarapa District Council's boards fall somewhere in between.

When considering whether or not Council should delegate a decision to a community board, budget implications must be taken into account. Council also needs to decide whether it wishes to have district wide policies on some matters or is prepared to administer policies that vary from town to town and the rate implications that may flow on from that. While increased local democracy may be the most desirable outcome in theory, any increase in costs associated with this would need to be made clear so the public could choose. A move away from district wide charging could also see lower value properties in the district impacted if each town became responsible for its own costs and cross subsidies between towns were removed.

2. Community Board Responsibilities

DECISION	CURRENT SITUATION	BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Training.	Budget currently managed by Council.	Yes. Allocation of budget to each board for decision by its own members.
Terms of reference for focus groups.	Currently Community Board consulted with sign off by Council.	Maybe. All focus groups could answer directly to the CB and apply to them for funding and no council input.
Naming of roads etc.	Currently recommendation to Council.	No. No change recommended due to statutory requirements.
Water Supply and Waste Water.	District Wide through LTP and Infrastructure Working Party which has CB members. Could formally seek CB's views.	Yes. A move away from district wide policies would have serious budget implications and require the special consultative procedure.
Hire of Council facilities and community group access to parks and reserves.	District wide policies with referral to CBs for input.	Yes. If individual town policies implemented. Also associated difficulties and additional costs for staff trying to administer different rules for different towns.
Regulatory, civil defence, promotion, community services, libraries, financial, admin and employment.	All currently district wide.	Yes. Financial, administrative and statutory implications.
Long Term Plan and Annual Plan.	Community Board input to the pre-draft with 'wish lists' which are fed into a draft district wide plan. CBs can also put submissions into the draft document.	Yes. There is scope to adopt the 'village plan' method similar to Porirua City. Each CB would lead the strategic discussion with its community on its requirements for the next 10 years and also report back on the budget implications which are then adopted off by Council.

The biggest scope for better engagement with and utilisation of our Community Boards is through the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan processes. The LTP in particular offers opportunities for the Community Boards to lead the strategic discussions on what their communities want for the future. This in turn can lead to recommendations to council that are solidly based and for CBs to take responsibility for their outcomes, both financially and materially. While this would take more resource than our current model, the scope for improved CB/Council/community relationships is huge.

In the short term, more use could be made of Community Board expertise in policy setting, particularly where the policy impacts on urban ratepayers. This could take the course of formally referring a policy to the three Community Board meetings for input before the paper is put to council. While it is recognised that this adds another step in a process and therefore requires scheduling by council officers, it also accesses more expertise and a broader point of view when setting policy.

Prepared by Her Worship the Mayor Adrienne Staples