SCOPING PAPER - OLDER PERSONS POLICY REVIEW

1.   Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the Older Persons Policy with updated information on the ageing demographic and what this potentially means for the city and Council.

The paper also seeks agreement to a policy scope to develop a revised Older Persons[1] Policy so that it is consistent with our strategy and direction outlined in Wellington 2040.

2.   Executive Summary

The need to review current arrangements is driven by related work that the Council has progressed (eg. Wellington 2040) and the subsequent relevance of the policy, changes in government priorities in the *Positive Ageing Strategy* and the need to account for the impacts of the ageing population in the Long Term Plan 2012-22.

What is being highlighted is the need for a policy response that will remain current as the Council implements its strategic objectives. The Council currently incorporate ageing issues into the way it does business. The current policy has an action focus which has largely been implemented. Given the demographic trends in the city (eg. lower than national average percentage of 65+ in the population, increasing percentage of the workforce, increasing percentage of non-European ethnicities, increasing additional wealth of this cohort), it is an opportune time to review and update the policy and its approach.

It is recommended that a framework policy approach be designed on the basis that it is underpinned by government priorities, aligns with primary Council plans and strategies, includes guiding principles on Council's role, establishes a progress monitoring process and aligns with the seven strategic areas in the Long Term Plan (LTP).

---

[1] For the purposes of this report and any subsequent policy adopted by Council, older persons is defined as over 65 years in line with current retirement age entitlements.

This would help ensure that the policy supports Council's governance role when initiatives are being planned and implemented. This approach would ensure that the Council addresses and responds to the practical issues facing older persons when developing, prioritising and implementing activities.

Such issues could include the retention of the "baby boomer" generation as they retire and cash up, managing the trend of more elderly transitioning directly from in-home support to hospitalisation, the future transport needs of the elderly, retaining a skilled workforce as people remain in the labour force for longer, and consideration of different ethnic needs as the relative percentage of elderly Maori, Pacific and Asian people increases.

Other options for a policy review approach are discussed in the paper and assessed. Options considered include an update of the policy to reflect priority actions, development of an older persons' strategy or provide a different policy approach for Council's collective response to older persons' considerations.

There has been initial engagement with key older persons interests through a workshop to identify the key issues and priority areas for Council services and interventions. Some delivery gaps and opportunities were also identified by testing Council's current responses to older persons' needs against the World Health Organisation's *Age Friendly City* checklists. Aspects of civic participation and employment, health services, information services, and promoting positive attitudes to ageing present as opportunities for further work.

Any revised policy would be developed in consultation with stakeholders and presented to Strategy and Policy Committee in December.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

2. *Note the social, economic and cultural impacts of the ageing population and how Council may need to change the way it engages and responds in the future (see Appendix 1).*

3. *Note the Council strategies, policies, plans and services that take into account the needs of older persons (see Section 5.2).*

4. *Note the following priority areas for Council interventions as identified at a stakeholder workshop:*
   - *community development and resilience,*
   - *research, understanding and strategy for action,*
   - *communications*
   - *housing,*
   - *isolation and disconnection,*
   - *transport.*

5.   *Agree to a review of the existing Older Persons Policy based on it providing a policy within which the Council business units consider the impacts of an ageing population and older persons' needs in their decisions and actions; and includes the following parameters:*

   (a)   *inclusion of principles that can be easily translated across the breadth of Council activities,*
   (b)   *alignment with Social and Recreation Strategy objectives,*
   (c)   *alignment to the seven strategic work areas,*
   (d)   *measurement and monitoring of progress,*
   (e)   *a change of title to Positive Ageing Policy.*

6.   *Note that a draft policy will be developed in consultation with key interested parties and reported back to Council for agreement to formally consult on a draft policy.*

4.   Background

4.1 Current Older Persons Policy

The Wellington City Council Older Persons Policy was adopted in April 2005. It is underpinned by the Social and Recreational Strategy however uses the Government's Positive Ageing Strategy framework as the basis for Council's responses to addressing the needs of a growing older population. The framework provides eight goals and the policy outlines the actions for the Council in each of these eight areas.

A dedicated staff person was initially assigned for a three year period to help deliver on these actions. There are now additional services and initiatives in place. Examples include the SuperGold Card, seniors' library services, regular communications to senior's networks, additional recreation programmes and more city mobility scooters are available. Momentum was also achieved in promoting the needs of older persons across various business units of Council.

The policy was designed in partnership with the seniors' community to be an action plan for Council responses to older persons' needs.

The current policy is limited by the fact that many of the actions have been delivered, parts have become standard operational procedures or older person's activities have been incorporated into subsequent plans. It also does not fully reflect current government priority areas in their Ageing Strategy (employment, changing attitudes and protecting rights) or recent work on the economic value associated with this growing population group.

4.2 Older Persons profile and growth projections

In the future, the ageing population will be:
- More active and engaged, placing demands on infrastructure and facilities,
- More likely to remain in employment beyond retirement age,
- An increasing draw on social and health services and expenditure,
- A more economically active cohort than previous generations,

- More ethnically, socially and economically diverse which means they cannot be treated as an homogeneous group.

Some statistical information, projections and analysis is provided in Appendix 1 to demonstrate the potential social, economic and cultural impacts of a growing older population for the city. Such information can help form the basis of Council's response to the ageing population. Factors considered are the increasing percentage of older persons in the population, workforce participation, income levels, health demands, housing and transport patterns.

5. Discussion

5.1 Implications for the Council

The demographics and dynamics of the city in 20 years time will be markedly different as a consequence of the ageing population. They will consume a disproportionate share of social and health budgets, be more engaged in community affairs, place greater expectations on the cityscape and potentially play an increasingly important role in the economy of the city.

Linking such factors to Council activities will be increasingly important for the vitality of the city. For example the ability to change the current trend of retiree age people leaving the city may require facilitating the development of housing options for the elderly and promoting the retention of skilled employees. In other areas that are primarily government funded such as health and in-home social services, Council may need to take a more active role as a co-ordination point for mobilising community resources for example.

Another issue the Council will need to be aware of is a continual shift in the balance of political power for older persons as their numbers grow. This could place additional expectations on Council on the nature of activities it provides and how they are funded.

5.2 What the Council already does

The Council already delivers a range of services and has strategies that take account of the ageing population and its future needs. The Older Persons Policy is one of these however much of this is also reflected or actioned in other council work. This activity includes:
- The seven strategic work areas in the Long Term Council Community Plan 2009-2019.
- Accessibility Wellington Action Plan – the draft plan out for consultation establishes actions for the Council and the wider community to improve access to participation, improve access to information and services, and build organisational capability.
- Community Facilities Policy – supporting investment in facilities that take into account the population base eg. Community Centres and social services
- Community Access to venues – promotes discounted access to Council venues for community groups.

- Cultural wellbeing framework – promotes activities such as libraries, arts and events that are available to older persons.
- Engagement framework – reviewing how and with whom the Council engages. It will recognise the need to engage with older persons and the diversity within this cohort.
- Housing Services Policy – the Council's social housing programme. recognises the ageing population issue and provides access to housing for the fit elderly on a subsidised basis.
- Leases Policy for Community and Recreational Groups – provides the opportunity for subsidised access to Council property for organised community and recreational activities.
- Mobility Parking Policy – determines Council approach to mobility parking and acknowledges a growing need.
- Open Spaces Strategy – will consider the impacts of the ageing population and resulting demands for use of open space and related activities.
- Public Conveniences Policy – provides for public amenities throughout the city to meet identified needs.
- Public Space Design Policy – provides for accessibility and safety features of importance for older citizens.
- Social and Recreational Strategy – forms the basis for many social and recreational services provided by the Council including the older persons policy, housing, recreation facilities and community centres.
- Rates Postponement Policy – provides for hardship rates relief.
- Recreational Programmes – the Council provides many regular classes and special events suitable for older person participation.
- Track Recreation Activities Policy – recognises the need to cater for all user including those with limited mobility.
- Transport Asset Management Plans – these acknowledge the ageing population trend and the more diverse needs and wants as a result. These plans cover issues such as paving, road design for safety, street lighting and signage.

In addition to these Council activities there are national and regional projects that have implications for Council responses to supporting an ageing population. Project examples include reviews on public transport services, affordable housing and the roles of metropolitan centres.

These activities collectively demonstrate that there is considerable overlap between the Older Persons Policy and a range of Council strategies, plans and policies that are in part designed to address the impacts of the ageing population. The Wellington 2040 project has also taken account of the ageing population so subsequent operational Council plans should account for such demographic trends.

This supports the need for a more strategic policy approach from Council on how it co-ordinates and actions its responses to an ageing population in line with Wellington 2040 in particular.

5.3   Policy gaps and opportunities

Council strategies, plans, policies and programme already (or propose to) largely account for an ageing population in the city, however a basis for determining what issues are not sufficiently addressed needs to be considered. The World Health Organisation[2] has produced a range of checklists that define an age friendly city. The factors included mirror the eight goals areas in the current Older Persons Policy and the Government's Positive Ageing Strategy.

In reviewing Council's current responses (see Section 5.2) against these "age friendly city" requirements, it is apparent that transport, housing, outdoor space and social participation factors are sufficiently considered in existing activities. Aspects of civic participation and employment, health services, information services, and promoting positive attitudes to ageing present are opportunities for further work. The 85 points in the age friendly checklists also provide a basis to both plan for and monitor progress.

A more generic policy approach could be warranted that accommodates changing priorities and a greater understanding of the implications of the ageing population over time. Targeted projects by the Council in priority areas identified through Council strategies and plans; and by community interests would complement this policy framework approach.

Such projects might relate to the retention of the "baby boomer" generation as they retire and cash up, managing the trend of more elderly transitioning directly from in-home support to hospitalisation, the future transport needs of the elderly, retaining a skilled workforce as people remain in the labour force for longer, and consideration of different ethnic needs as the relative percentage of elderly Maori, Pacific and Asian people increases.

5.4   Stakeholder Views

Thirty organisations, clubs or agencies involved in older persons' activities were invited to attend a workshop in September to:

- Identify the key issue for older persons in the city,
- Identify the priority areas for Council interventions.

The workshop participants represented older persons' advocacy, health, housing, recreational, volunteer, social services and ethnicity interests. Seventeen (17) broad issues were identified of which 6 were prioritised as important for the Council to play an active and on-going role in. These were:

1. *Community development and resilience* –the lack of collaboration and a call for better sharing and mobilisation of community resources.
2. *Research, Understanding and Strategy for Action* – the need for strategic leadership, consulting with those parties who best understand the issues, interpreting (and communicating) what statistical data is telling us and using international good practice.

---

[2] WHO checklists are available and include housing, transportation, social participation, outdoor spaces, civic participation and employment, health services, respect and information related activities that should be provided by a city to be considered age friendly.

3. *Communication* - having easy access to information on services available for older persons, overcoming language barriers and providing opportunities for widely sharing information.
4. *Housing* – issues relate to the availability, quality, access to, affordability and options for housing of older people.
5. *Isolation and disconnection* - lack of social cohesion, brittle support services and health implications resulting from isolation of older persons.
6. *Transport* – parking access for the elderly (particularly in suburbs) and the availability of cheap/free access to public transport over an extended period.

The range of issues raised was consistent with the Positive Ageing Strategy goals. The six priority areas identified reflected where it was believed that the Council could influence the outcome as opposed to prioritisation of all the key issues impacting on older persons.

Presentations were also provided to, and feedback received from, the Pacific Advisory Group (PAG) and the Accessibility Action Group (AAG). Feedback was consistent with the workshop findings and in the case of AAG, also supported the outcomes from the stakeholder workshop.

5.5   Options to consider Council responses to ageing population

There are several approaches that Council could adopt to promote how it plans and provides for the needs of older persons in the community. These include updating the existing policy (action plan) to better reflect current priorities and capture policy gaps, developing an older persons' strategy, or provide a policy that encompasses older person considerations on an ongoing basis across all Council activity areas.

An update of the existing policy action plan limits responsiveness to changing priorities over time. Neither is there a dedicated function within Council to manage or implement actions as was previously the case. Developing an Older Persons Strategy risks creating overlaps with other Council strategies which already acknowledge the impacts of an ageing population. It would also likely create an expectation of additional resourcing for implementation.

A policy framework approach is recommended on the basis that it retains currency, avoids overlap and promotes ageing population implications across all Council activities. It would also provide a point of reference so that decisions can be taken while understanding the importance of an ageing population and related issues. Such a policy framework approach would be designed on the basis that:

1. it is underpinned by government priorities and primary Council plans and strategies,
2. the objectives of the *Social and Recreational Strategy* are adopted as an appropriate fit for the relevant policy areas,
3. it is guided by a set of principles,
4. Council activities are grouped in the seven strategic areas in the LTP. – governance, economic development, environment, cultural well-being, social and recreation, urban development and transport,

5.   older persons and ageing population considerations in these seven work areas are captured in the relevant Council action plans and service delivery i.e. provision for an ageing population is mainstreamed in council processes,
6.   it provides a process for measuring and monitoring progress of older persons' priorities.

What this approach effectively achieves is retention of the policy structure, intent and objectives but transfers consideration of older persons' needs and appropriate responses, to the relevant parts of the Council that are responsible for implementation. The policy then provides a long term basis to reflect changing Council priorities, the economic environment and community needs.

It is also suggested that the term Active or Positive Ageing be adopted rather than Older Persons. Active or Positive Ageing better reflects international common usage and promotes a greater sense of engagement rather than a bias towards social support services for the elderly. The stakeholder workshop participants and AAG generally supported a change to Positive Ageing as a title.

6.   Conclusion

The impacts of an ageing population will be significant for the city. There will be positive and negative aspects to this situation. Many existing Council strategies, plans and services already acknowledge and respond to older persons' needs, so the need for a separate action-based policy for older persons is questioned.

It is suggested that an appropriate policy response is to provide a policy within which ageing populations factors are considered in strategic planning and business as usual manner. This way there is a consistency of approach and the development of a culture of accounting for older persons across all Council activities is promoted.

A draft Active or Positive Ageing Policy would be developed and presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee. This would include context, the framework within which to consider the impacts of an ageing population, and guiding statements on Council's roles in supporting active ageing.

7.   Timelines

1.   Report to SPC - Approach to the review following consultation with interest groups, 20 October 2011.
2.   Draft Positive Ageing Policy to SPC, December 2011
     (Developed in consultation with interest groups to capture expectations and priority outcomes).
3.   Formal community consultation, Feb – March 2012
     Oral Hearings, April 2012.
4.   Final Policy for adoption by Council, May 2012.

Contact Officers: *Colin Drew, Programme Manager, Policy and Jaime Dyhrberg, Principal Adviser, City Communities*

Appendix 1 – Statistical Analysis of the Ageing Population

1. Percentage of Population

The percentage of older people in the population will dramatically increase as the "baby boomer" generation moves into retirement age. For metropolitan areas like Wellington, this age cohort is more likely to retire elsewhere as demonstrated by the significantly lower percentage of total population than the national average. There are positives and negatives to this situation if the projections become reality.

Numbers 65+	2006	2011	2021	2031
Percentage of population – New Zealand	12.2	13.1	16.9	20.8
Percentage of population – Wellington	8.3		11.3	14.5

Source: Statistics NZ Population Forecasts 2006-2031.

The positives relate to theoretically less demand for social and health services, and less demand on infrastructure and facilities. The negative implications of a large migration out of the city from around retirement age are the loss of skills in the workforce as older people tend to continue working and the loss of spending power in the city from the high proportion of more affluent people in the city.

If the percentage of older persons did track as forecast and remain significantly lower than the national figure, then another risk is a net loss of public expenditure compared (eg health) to tax generated in the city

2. Diversity

Older persons is not a homogeneous group and will become increasingly diverse over time in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic factors.

Ethnicity 65+	2006 (Wgtn)	2006 (NZ)	2026 (NZ)
Percentage European/Pakeha	88	90.5	82.5
Percentage Maori	5	5	7
Percentage Pacific Island	2	2.3	3.3
Percentage Asian	3	3.7	9.4

Source: Statistics NZ National Ethnic Populations Projections 2006-2026.

The Asian group increased from 1% to 3% between 2001 and 206 and is forecast to continue to rise significantly. The lower percentage of older Maori compared to the total population can possibly be attributed to a higher mortality rate.

The Neilson Company Report for the HOPE Foundation on Aging (July 2009) characterised the older age group into 5 segments based on factors such gender, income, home ownership and age. They are

- Traditionalists (22%) - mostly male, average income, lower age, employed
- Paradoxical Pensioners (15%) - lower incomes, renters, higher age bracket
- Active and Aware (19%) - more females, own homes, average income
- Kiwi Battlers (25%) - lowest income, female bias, older end of age spectrum
- Affluent investors (19%) - wealthier, own home, in the workplace, younger cohort.

The needs, motivations and expectations of the City will vary for each of these groupings. Thus to some degree the Council services and policies may need to more targeted depending on what the outcomes sought are.

3. Workforce

Research produced by the Ministry of Social Development on the future economic contribution of the over 65 age group demonstrates an increasing propensity for them to remain in employment in some capacity. Obviously this trend would be increased by a raising of the retirement age from 65. The workforce participation rate is steadily increasing and the percentage of older people making up the workforce is anticipated to double in the next 20 years.

Working 65+	2006	2011	2021	2031
Workforce participation - NZ[3]	12	18	24	23
Percentage of workforce – NZ	2	4	6	8

The notion of life long learning is also supported where the percentage of elderly persons enrolled in tertiary education rose from 0.1% in 1999 to 2% by 2005 The retention of a skilled workforce after retirement age may well be critical in meeting future skills and labour shortages in the city.

4. Income Levels

In relative terms, the total income of the older persons' population is projected to treble in 25 years from the 2006 level. This is as a result of greater wealth than previous generations and many continuing to work in some capacity.

Income 65+	2006	2011	2021	2031
Total income 65+ – NZ ($ billion)	10.98	13.4	21.31	33.01

The economic profile of baby boomers in Wellington suggests that this cohort will be far more economically active than the national average. In the 2006 census, 46% of the people in the 40-60 age group had household incomes over $100,000 compared with 26% nationally.

---

[3] Workforce participation rate, percentage of workforce and total income projections are based on 2010 figures supplied to The Treasury by Statistics NZ (Medium Projection Range)

From an economic perspective, the spending power of an increasing aging population may be an important consideration in maintaining the vitality of the city centre and suburban areas.

5. Health

The process of aging is generally associated with some decline in functional capacity and an increased demand for health services. The cost of health care for the 65+ age group is forecast to increase from 37% of the national health budget in 2006 to 50% by 2028[4].

In 2001, 54% of older persons reported some form of disability that meant future accessibility issues for them.[5]

Diet, lifestyle choices and potentially medical advances are improving the aging process however these benefits are not shared equitably across population groups. For example life expectancy for Maori and Pacific Peoples is significantly lower than that of Europeans. Good health outcomes for the city will rely on socio-economic factors and targeted health services.

6. Housing

The 2006 *Wellington Housing Needs Assessment* highlights the following trends:
- A growing undersupply of housing
- More renters
- Increasing affordability issues
- More demands for social housing but no plans by the Council or Housing NZ to increase the current numbers.

The growing older population and their relative housing status will have implications for the city. For those on lower incomes and/or not owning their own home, the demands for social housing in the city is likely to increase. Conversely for more affluent residents, the high value of their property and/or costs associated with living in the city may be a catalyst to retire elsewhere.

7. Transport

An ageing population and socio-economic dynamics will have a range of implications for the transport network. As health levels improve, older people will remain independent with cars for a longer period. They will become more reliant on their own transport, a public system, taxis or walking than is currently the case. The reasons for this situation relate to less likelihood of family living nearby (less children and more overseas) to provide support, and more financial independence to fund transport options as private pensions and the Kiwisaver scheme begin to kick in.

---

[4] Ministry of Health (Aug 2010), *Trends in Service Design and New Models of Care.*
[5] WCC (2008) Library Report on seniors services

The World Health Organisation (WHO) provides international guidelines for an age friendly city and the transport network and safety options that need to be promoted. The Council has influence over some aspects including parking, building access, road design, pavements and walking facilities.

8. Community Participation and Recreation

Research in this area generally agrees that older people will continue to be more engaged in the community through employment, volunteer work, community groups and recreational activities. Keeping a high level of involvement with this group will put additional pressures on the provision of Council facilities, services and programmes.