
REPORT 1B
(1215/52/IM)

DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2010/11: REPORT OF THE HEARINGS SUBCOMMITTEE

1. Purpose of Report

An outline of the submissions to the Hearings Subcommittee and associated minutes are presented for receipt.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Receive the minutes of the draft Annual Plan Hearings Subcommittee meeting of 13 May 2010 (attached as appendix one).*

3. Background

The Council is required to use the special consultative procedure as part of its adoption of the annual plan. The process includes offering submitters the chance to speak and to hear those that wish to.

Two other related topics were consulted on at the same time as the annual plan:

- Draft Climate Change Action Plan
- Draft Community Facilities Policy.

The combined consultations resulted in 82 submitters taking up the opportunity to present their submissions to the subcommittee. This occurred over three and a half days.

This report provides a brief overview of the main issues that were presented and the minutes of the meeting.

3.1 Subcommittee Format

This is the fifth year that Council has used a subcommittee to hear submissions on its long term or annual plans. The subcommittee structure is designed to be an inviting format for submitters and is seen to provide greater opportunities for engagement than hearings of the full Strategy and Policy Committee.

3.1.1 Membership

The subcommittee comprised each of the portfolio leaders, with the governance portfolio leader as chair. This ensured a range of perspectives were present. A number of Councillors who were not members were also frequently present to hear submissions. Attendance is noted in the attached minutes.

The subcommittee has no decision making powers. Its delegations require it to report to the Strategy and Policy Committee.

3.1.2 Summary of themes

The hearings were an open forum and submitters were free to comment on any items associated with the draft annual plan or related matters open to consultation. The majority spoke to one activity.

In general, the issues raised at the hearings were indicative of the overall tenor of the written submissions. Swimming pool provision, responses to climate change, access to community facilities, and transport management were common themes.

The full set of written submissions has been distributed and made publicly available. A summary of the main themes from the written submissions is provided in a separate report on this agenda.

4. Discussion

The following section summarises some of the key and recurring themes that were raised at the hearings.

4.1 Swimming pool provision

The capacity of aquatic facilities was raised by a number of submitters - most notably by representatives of swimming clubs and schools. Discussions were largely confined to lack of pool space at key times of the day and the need for the provision of additional pool space rather than making use of pools at off-peak times. There was a mix of priorities expressed.

A common theme that emerged primarily from clubs was the need for exclusive use of pool spaces at given times. They argued their ability to access pool space has become more difficult and the ability to develop skills was being compromised. The congestion in swimming lanes – when elite athletes are training – was illustrative of the sub-optimal conditions they face.

The proposed solution was the provision of additional aquatic space. Some submitters argued this would have other benefits such as attracting sports events and visitors to the city. There was a general acceptance by users that additional rates would be an appropriate way of funding new facilities. Comments about the revenue stream swimmers offered were balanced by acknowledgement of the current funding split that sees ratepayers cover 60 percent of pool costs

The introduction of a \$2 million school partnerships programme was also raised frequently. This was seen to address the need for learn to swim programmes and was raised primarily by schools, principals and parents.

The benefits of the partnership approach were seen to be:

- It reduced entry barriers. Travel times impacted on the length of swimming programmes and their effectiveness. The cost of travel was also noted.
- It added to a sense of community. Submitters noted that the school pools programmes would be open to those not on the school roll. It was also acknowledged that any provision would need to be on a catchment basis across the city.
- It improved swimming standards. An example was that classes could be tailored to children in the local area who had English as a second language.
- That ongoing running costs could be met by schools through lesson fees and fundraising.

Submitters argued that the current proposed level of funding for school partnerships would have a limited impact. Most noted they were facing asset replacement costs of between \$150k and \$250k to ensure the pools were operable. There were also some submitters who disagreed with Council funding of school pools noting this is the role of central government and that the investment should be made to Council owned pools.

Other comments on pools included making more effective use of space at the historic Thorndon Pool and providing greater clarity about the objective that is being sought in the policy.

4.2 Climate change

The Council received praise for introducing the Climate Change Action Plan. While the vast majority of comments were supportive of the plan there was a desire that the Council go further. A recurring theme was the need to match the emission reduction targets with the science. Some submitters commented that the level was comparatively low compared to other investments.

Adaption steps were also encouraged. These included introducing rules that require properties to be set back in coastal areas to lessen the impact of sea level rise and storm surges. Limiting the airport's extension to limit emissions from aviation travel was also suggested.

The Council was encouraged to continue with its leadership role as local businesses were taking steps to reduce their impact on the environment. The Enviromark programme and Kai to Compost initiatives were seen as positive programmes and the steps taxi companies have taken towards carbon neutrality were also noted.

4.3 Transport

The role of public transport and cycling were also raised often in the context of the Climate Change Action Plan. Overall those that commented favoured improved reliability of the public transport network and safety for cyclists. Applying the funding currently tagged for free weekend parking to free public transport at the weekend was indicative of the underlying arguments to develop the city in a way that relied less on cars.

4.4 Libraries, recreational and community facilities

A number of submitters commented on the Community Facilities Policy. Most comments related to support of provision in local areas. Some submitters expressed concern at their interpretation that some libraries would close under the policy. They sought either a statement to clarify that current services would not close or clarity on the definitions in the policy.

A couple of recreational matters other than pools were raised. The introduction of synthetic surfaces was welcomed. The introduction of these was seen as an effective way of: managing growth in player numbers; improving ball skills; and reducing the impact of cancellations caused by bad weather. The introduction of a service level agreement for surf life saving at Lyall Bay was questioned by an adjacent club as it went against the voluntary ethos of surf life saving.

4.6 Consultation

The consultation process, associated documents and decision-making were raised intermittently during the hearings. Submitters were generally appreciative of the opportunity to participate. A number thanked the Council for its work in developing the plan and for presenting that in a clear way. Others suggested new formatting to ensure the publications were accessible (in print and online) and reduced paper use.

The running of three consultations at the same time was seen as placing undue pressure on those wishing to make submissions.

4.7 Funding requests

Requests for funding were made by a number of submitters. These requests, and officers' recommendations to them, are detailed in the *Key Issues and Funding Requests* report on this agenda.

4.8 Miscellaneous

While the bulk of submissions covered the matters above there were a variety of other matters raised. These were often of an operational nature and will be followed up by officers. Examples include the impact of dog control on the use of Seatoun Beach, timing of Otari Wilton Bush upgrades, and the creation of a public screening facility for documentaries and local film.

4.8.1 Fluoride

A delegation presented a video highlighting their concerns on fluoridation of drinking water. These included dental fluorosis, mass consumption as distinct from the benefits of directly applying fluoride to the teeth, and the absence of informed consent.

A summary of all oral submissions is provided in the attached minutes.

5. Conclusion

The Hearings Subcommittee met over three and half days to receive submissions on draft versions of the Annual Plan 2010/11, Community Facility Policy, and Climate Change Action Plan. In keeping with its terms of reference a report consisting of a summary overview and minutes of these hearings is presented for consideration and record.

Contact: *Deputy Mayor Ian McKinnon, Chair of the Draft Annual Plan Hearings Subcommittee*