

Subject: Older Persons Policy

Prepared by: Judy Livingston (Community Development Team Leader)

Meeting Date: 10 March 2010

Report to COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT Committee for decision

SUMMARY

At the Community Development meeting on 11 November 2009 under Report 09/580 this Committee requested that a report be prepared on the practical processes that Council can undertake to consult with older persons and the providers of services to senior citizens.

Council does not have an Older Persons Policy that reflects how it should engage with the senior community. Given the increasing demographic in the senior sector it is appropriate that Council has such a policy.

In consultation with the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Trust a policy has been prepared. At the Trust meeting on Friday 19 February 2010 they resolved to support the Policy in principle.

It is appropriate that Council now adopt an Older Persons Policy to support its ongoing interaction with this sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

- 1. receives the report**
- 2. Recommends that Council**
 - a) adopts the Older Persons Policy.**

Judy Livingston
Community Development Team Leader

Nedine Thatcher-Swann
Community Planning & Development Manager

Encl.

1. BACKGROUND

People today are living longer and healthier lives than previous generations. There are real opportunities for current and future seniors to enjoy an improved quality of life. However there are some challenges, particularly in the way Local Government engages with this sector.

The Gisborne District Council through its adoption of the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Strategy (08/357) on 31 July 2008 has supported seniors having the right to participate fully in our society. Council has engaged and consulted with seniors since that date via the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Trust (TPAT). However Council does not have an Older Persons Policy which sets out Council's strategy or goals of engagement with this sector.

2. DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS

Towards the end of 2009 the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Trust (TPAT) approached Council's Community Development Unit to discuss how the lack of a Council Older Persons' Policy could be rectified. After discussion with the Community Planning & Development Manager, a decision was made to address this issue and put forward a recommendation for Council to consider.

Council personnel have since consulted with TPAT. During discussions TPAT identified five key principles about the rights of seniors that should underpin the Policy. These are:

1. Confidence that senior rights will be upheld, their autonomy accepted and their dignity respected.
2. Certainty that they are valued and listened to for their past, current and future contributions.
3. Opportunities to fully participate in their communities.
4. Access to information, support and services to maximise their independence and maintain their health and wellbeing.
5. Local Government services are responsive to their particular needs and interests and which recognise the increasing diversity of our community.

The above was taken into consideration in the development of Council's Older Persons' Policy. A draft Policy was presented to TPAT's meeting on 19 February 2010 and they resolved to support the Policy in principle. That support is now sought from Council.

Why is a Policy necessary?

The main driver for this Policy is that Tairāwhiti 's population is ageing. Gisborne's population aged 65 and over will increase from 5900¹ to 10,100 by 2031. For Council, our rapidly ageing population presents a very real challenge – the challenge to serve seniors well and to create communities which allow all members to participate fully.

Consultation with seniors will become more relevant as the population ages and it is imperative that Council has an appropriate tool through which it can engage and a mechanism through which external entities can engage. This Policy will therefore prove valuable to the Mayor and Councillors, Council staff, Government and non-Government agencies, senior providers, seniors and the wider population.

¹ 2006 Census figures

What happens if we don't do anything?

Council is the key provider of infrastructure throughout Tairāwhiti and while it must service the needs of the whole community, seniors in the future will have specific requirements. Should Council not do anything then it would continue to consult via its LTCCP, Annual Plan and on other specific projects. However it is unrealistic of Council to ignore the needs and aspirations of older people given the changing demographic and the impact this sector will have on the future of this district.

If Council is serious about ensuring that adequate infrastructure, resources and services are available for our aging population, we must begin planning now. TPAT have advised that the seniors sector would like Council to consider implementing the Age Friendly City concept. Therefore Council would be advised to undertake a "Senior Needs Assessment". Analysis of the results would enable Council to develop a "Comprehensive Plan for Seniors" which would clearly identify the requirements of seniors and the implications on Council, particularly financial.

Are there major issues with the way Council currently operates?

Seniors currently input into Council processes through LTCCP and the Annual Plan submissions, and through public forums. Some Council departments consult directly with TPAT and other senior providers into specific areas viz disability, bus transport, walkways. Council does not have a specific focus on the senior population.

What are the implications for other departments?

Population ageing will impact Council's planning and service delivery across a range of departments.

Tairāwhiti's ageing population will expect Council to provide:

- an age friendly built environment. Council will be expected to provide public open space areas that enhance the urban landscape which contribute to senior health and wellbeing.
- accessible and supportive living environments which make it possible for older people to live as independently as possible. This is relevant to Council's land use planning responsibilities, as well as community safety and provision of adequate transport services.
- social support through partnerships with TPAT, Senior Citizens, Grey Power, Gisborne Volunteer Centre etc. Seniors expect to see Council staff out in the community supporting deliverables that specifically target their needs.

Council delivers the above across multiple departments, however in future there could be more emphasis on these which means Council could face greater budgetary pressures from population ageing than from traditional activities such as road and infrastructure provision and maintenance.

While some activities will require significant financial support there are opportunities for Council to work in partnership with non-Government sector entities to support other deliverables. To reassure Council the expectations above will be no different to those placed on other TLAs throughout New Zealand.

From a senior's perspective they do expect Council to be a key stakeholder in the community and support the delivery of service/infrastructure.

Adoption of this policy means that the Gisborne District Council will have a Policy that supports its engagement with this sector. Council will be recognised by residents and non-residents as an entity that embraces its senior population as a highly valued and integral part of the community.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

The Policy is of low significance as it will not immediately change the well-being of seniors, however it establishes a guideline for Council's interaction with the sector and confirms that the Gisborne District Council will continue to consider and action the best interests of this region's older population.

4. CONSULTATION

The report reflects the views and preferences of those with an interest in this matter and who have been duly consulted.

5. COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

The Policy supports the community outcomes defined in the LTCCP – Vibrant Tairāwhiti, Connected Tairāwhiti, Safe Tairāwhiti, Healthy Tairāwhiti and Empowered Tairāwhiti.

6. LEVELS OF SERVICE

Adoption of this policy will not impact or change Council's current levels of service to this sector.

7. FINANCIAL

This is not significant. Monitoring and implementation of this policy is at no cost to Council and any operational activities would be funded through Departmental operational budgets.

8. LEGAL

This is not applicable.

9. POLICY

The Older Persons' Policy is underpinned by other Council Policies/documents such as the Social Policy, Disability Strategy, Consultation Policy, the Tairāwhiti Active Recreation Strategy, Walking and Cycling Strategy, as examples. It has been developed to closely align with the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy managed by the Ministry of Social Development, the Elder Abuse and Neglect Guidelines (2007) managed by the Ministry of Health and the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Strategy managed by the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Trust. The policy should be read in conjunction with these documents.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Councillors must consider any decision under Section 78(1) of the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002, "Community Views in Relation to Decision". In considering this Section, Councillors should acknowledge that the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Trust supported by the Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing in Action Accord encompasses the region's key stakeholders and service providers for older persons.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Gisborne District Council - Older Persons' Policy.



OLDER PERSONS' POLICY

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

POLICY REFERENCES

- Sponsor: Community Development & Planning Manager
- Effective: 1 April 2010
- Internal Review Date: 3 years (01/04/2013)
- Legal Compliance: N/A
- Associated Documents: Tairāwhiti Positive Ageing Strategy
New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy
Elder Abuse and Neglect Guidelines
Various GDC Policies/Strategies
- Policy Number: INTOP/OP

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support Gisborne District Council's commitment to be a district that: values its older people¹; promotes their meaningful contribution to the community; and facilitates a positive ageing experience for all. The Gisborne District Council Older Persons Policy is based on the following general principles:

1. Older people have a right to independence, self determination and dignity.
2. Older people are able to participate in all aspects of the community.
3. Older people in Tairāwhiti encompass a diverse range of experience and cultural backgrounds therefore the special role older people play in different cultural settings is acknowledged.
4. We recognise the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the mana accorded to Kaumatua²/older people within Maori society.
5. Older people have the power to make decisions about issues affecting them.
6. The skills and abilities of older people are a community resource.
7. Older people are valued and respected.
8. Older people acknowledge other members of the community, and identify partnership opportunities and intergenerational links.
9. We recognise that a growth in the older population will impact both the rural and city environment and will take this into consideration in future planning of infrastructure, transport, housing and other deliverables.

¹ In terms of the chronological age adopted by central government, 'older people' are generally accepted to be those that are 65 and over.

² Kaumatua are respected elders of either gender in a Māori community who have been involved with their whānau for a number of years. *Definition sourced from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaumatua*

POLICY

1. Inclusion

Older people need to feel included in all aspects of the community and in particular decision making related to them.

Goal: To provide opportunities for older people to be involved in Community and Council decision making processes, so that they can have opportunities to contribute to planning, and have their needs being recognised and to develop stronger community networks that engage older persons.

2. Promotion and Provision

Recognising the ageing population of New Zealand and this district, Council aims to provide and promote a range of accessible recreation, transport, housing, community resources and public services.

Goal: To promote "ageing in place" by ensuring a safe and caring environment which includes a variety of recreation, mobility and transport options; affordable, accessible and safe housing options; access to community facilities and public services, including the natural environment.

3. Collaboration

Older People's well being is strengthened when there is sharing of information between organisations involved with providing services for older people.

Goal: To facilitate collaboration between local and national organisations to ensure that comprehensive information, support and services are easy to access by older people, their whanau and service providers.

4. Engaged and Active

Older people are living longer more active lives and need events and places to go, in both their own communities and central locations, to promote being active and positively engaged.

Goal: To facilitate and advocate for a range of opportunities, including education and learning, for older people to engage in, to allow them to keep physically and mentally active.

Application

This is a Council-wide policy and applies to all Council employees, councillors, senior sector and general public who wish to engage with Council on issues specific to seniors in Tairāwhiti.