MMResearch™

Evaluation of Mechanisms to Promote Local Representation for Hutt City Council

(July 2009)

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"Council is committed to supporting and working in partnership with its many diverse communities, both individually and collectively, to strengthen them and create a better City. By understanding our communities' values and aspirations and through that, building strong partnerships, Council seeks to raise levels of trust and confidence, increase social cohesion and realise its vision for the City."

- Hutt City Council Involving Our Communities:
  A Statement of Intention 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Context

Hutt City Council is governed by a Mayor and 12 Councillors, all of whom are elected by Hutt City residents. To ensure that each part of the City is represented in the Council, the city is divided into six separate wards and each ward elects two members to represent them on Council. The Mayor is elected by residents across the six wards.

The elected Council sets the broad strategic direction and policies for the Chief Executive and staff of Hutt City Council to implement, and it audits the results. Council ensures, on behalf of the community, that the organisation achieves what it should and that it avoids undesirable situations and circumstances.

Hutt City Council also has three Community Boards (CBs) (set up under the Local Government Act) – Eastbourne, Petone and Wainuiomata – and two Community Committees (set up by Council) were constituted in March 2008 in areas not served by Community Boards – Central/West and North/East. The role of these local representatives is to support Council in its governance role by facilitating local input into Council's decision-making processes. So while the role of the Council is to look after the affairs of the whole city, the role of Community Boards and Committees is to represent the interests of their specific community. The specific roles of Community Boards (constituted under section 52 of the LGA 2002) are to:

- Represent, and act as advocate for, the interests of its community;
- Consider and report on all matters referred to it by Council and any issues of interest or concern to the Community Board;
- Make an annual submission to Council on projects and expenditure in the community;
- Maintain an overview of services provided by Council within the local community;
- Act as a channel of communication between the community and Council; and
- Undertake any other responsibilities delegated by Council.

Community Committees (CCs) have been established under Clauses 30 and 31, Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002 have similar roles.

The range of functions delegated by Council to Community Boards and Community Committees includes:

- Providing their local community's input into strategic planning, resource management and road safety issues;
- Maintaining an overview of roadworks, water supply, sewerage, storm water, drainage and waste management for its local area; and

- Developing local community plans in close consultation with their community.

There are up to seven elected members on each of the three Community Boards, and two councillors appointed by Council. There are five members on each of the Community Committees, and four councillors, all appointed by Council.

Community Boards, Community Committees and Council meet together around once every six weeks. The public are not invited to these liaison meetings. Individual Community Boards and Community Committees hold separate public meetings in their respective communities around once a month.

The Purpose of the Research

Hutt City Council (HCC) wants to understand the *effectiveness* of current representation arrangements in enabling communities to actively participate in local decision making. The focus of this report is to uncover the overall effectiveness of how these delegations, functions and mechanisms work and whether improvements can be made to ensure that decision making and governance by Council fully reflect local community participation.

The evaluation findings will assist HCC in assessing the *effectiveness* of the operational structure of CBs/CCs and identify any improvements that may be able to be made in the way Council works with Boards and Committees and, in turn, how Boards and Committees work with their respective communities.

Local communities are defined as individuals or groups living or existing/operating in a certain geographic area within the jurisdiction of HCC. This could be individual members within the community or interest groups like residents' associations, retailers' or business associations, youth groups, Māori, sports clubs, older people as well as single issue lobby groups.

1.2   Research Objectives

The Research Objectives have been articulated in the Request for Proposal (RFP) as follows:

- To understand how the way that Council works together with CBs/CCs and the way that CBs/CCs work together with the communities they represent, enables or not, community representation and participation in local decision making processes.

- To investigate the effectiveness of specific mechanisms that support community representation.

- To review the delegation of the Council's functions to CBs/CCs.

- To make recommendations on how current representation arrangements could be improved to enable communities to actively participate in local decision making.

1.3 Research Methodology

In response to the RFP and following an internal scoping meeting by the team at **MM**Research™, we took a *qualitative* research approach as the most appropriate way of addressing the research objectives.

Qualitative research is collecting, analysing, and interpreting information by observing what people do and say. Qualitative research uses a variety of methods of information gathering, mainly individual, in-depth interviews, focus groups and qualitative telephone interviews. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended as we were seeking opinions, perceptions and ideas. It involved small numbers of people from the stakeholder groups who were interviewed in depth.

1.3.1 Research strategy

We have conducted in-depth interviews with representatives of the various stakeholder groups, supported by a small number of focus groups, mini focus groups and telephone interviews. The interviewer delved deep into the issues at hand unearthing information that may otherwise have been difficult to obtain.

The focus groups provided breadth. As the moderator allowed a certain degree of discussion on each topic, the resulting synergy opened the topic up for further discussion and exploration.

Specifically, we undertook the following information gathering programme. We conducted:

- mini focus groups with two or three representatives (including the Chair) of each the CBs and CCs

- in-depth interviews with three Councillors

- in-depth interviews with four Council staff

- two full size focus groups with members of the community and community groups

- brief telephone interviews with a small number of key community informants; and

- we reviewed key documents such as Council policy documents, Statement of Intent, Delegations and Functions, governance documents and appropriate literature on mechanisms for community representation.

2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These conclusions and recommendations are based on the discussions with Board and Committee members, Councillors, Council staff and community representatives. They are also informed by a review of relevant Council documents and relevant literature. We recommend that anyone interested in finding out more about the different models of community boards in local government should refer to a report by Mike Richardson (2008) prepared for the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance[1]. Many of the findings in Richardson's report are reinforced in the following recommendations.

Conclusions	Recommendations
1. There appears to be a low level of awareness by some community representatives of Community Boards/Committees.	1. It probably falls on Community Boards/Committees to ensure that they identify the community groups within their geographical area and develop a mutually beneficial relationship with these groups. Council and Council officers should also promote CBs/CCs to community groups.
2. Most CB/CC members were happy with the level of administrative and professional support they receive from Council staff.	2. The current level of support should continue.
3. The CBs/CCs currently have minimal delegations which mean that the potential for decisions to be made as closely as possibly to the communities of interest is limited.	3. Delegating wider powers to the local CB/CC can ensure 'grassroots' decisions are made close to local communities. If CBs/CCs had greater delegated decision making powers this may give them a greater understanding of their purpose and value.
4. When effective, CBs/CCs can play an important role in building social capital and raising awareness of local government decision making processes within local communities.	4. It is important that the Council promotes the potentially significant role of CBs/CCs as a community voice in the local government process and encourages local people to stand for their CB/CC and participate.

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[1]   Refer to Mike Richardson (2008) *Setting Community Boards in Context.* A report prepared for the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance. Salt & Light IHS Limited for further information on the widely differing ways that community boards are delegated authorities.

Conclusions	Recommendations
5. CBs/CCs have not found it easy to engage with minority groups. Some of these groups have not shown a great deal of interest in working with CBs/CCs and, more often than not, they tend to by-pass CBs/CCs and liaise directly with a Councillor or a Council officer with whom they may have an existing, and sometimes long standing, relationship.	5. It is recommended that Council (Community Development) and Boards/Committees jointly look at ways that make it easier for minority groups to engage with CBs/CCs and vice versa.
6. The Local Community Plans are potentially a valuable tool for engaging local communities in council planning processes and bringing communities together.	6. Resources need to be made available to allow parts of these plans to be implemented in order to give the plans validity and credibility within communities. CBs/CCs need enough time for community consultation, feedback from the Council, guidance on the contents of the plans and an appropriate level of funding to implement the Local Community Plans.
7. The evaluation findings suggest that current relationships between the Council and the CBs/CCs are not based on trust and lack a collaborative and constructive focus.	7. In line with the Statement of Intention (refer to Section 3 Results and Findings on page 7), a philosophy of partnership between the Council and the CBs/CCs should be used as a starting point[2] (refer also Section 4 Discussion on page 27).
8. The Community Committees (Central West CC and North East CC) are an amalgam of widely disparate communities artificially joined together to form a Community Committee. Community Committees have greater potential to be more effective when they represent a distinct community of interest or geographical identity.	8. Council should review the current boundaries of the two Community Committees to ensure they best represent a distinct or natural 'community' of common interest.
9. The $5,000 administration budget appears to be insufficient to fund meeting costs, advertising, mail drops, website development and maintenance, cost associated with additional community consultation meetings, additional administration support and incidentals.	9. The administration budget for the CBs/CCs should be reviewed to reflect the true cost of effective community engagement.

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[2] The approach adopted by Queenstown Lakes District Council with the Wanaka Community Board is based on a philosophy of partnership, with the Council treating the Board as a partner in the governance of the district (Richardson, 2008, p7).

Conclusions	Recommendations
10. There was some suggestion that the appointment of Community Committee members by Council on the basis of CV's is potentially inequitable and that those communities should have the right to elect their own representatives.	10. The Council should review the selection process of Community Committee members.
11. There is currently a lack of information or a transparent process in terms of how information from CBs/CCs is incorporated into Council planning documents.	11. The role and relationship between the Council's processes and CBs/CCs needs to be more explicit as CB/CC members are often unclear about how the work of CBs/CCs is integrated into Council decision making. In particular, there needs to be greater Council support for the Local Community Plans in terms of a clear understanding of how they feed into the LTCCP
12. The Hutt City Council website, www.huttcity.govt.nz received much criticism from respondents, including members of the community. It is deemed very user un-friendly, difficult to navigate and the search function "absolutely useless". Web capability is becoming an increasingly important communication tool for CBs/CCs	12. The Hutt City Council website needs to be redesigned. All CBs/CCs should be provided with a one-off budget to develop their own website, linked to Hutt City's website. Maintenance cost should be provided for from an increased administration budget.
13. The purpose of the liaison meetings is unclear. While most people thought they were a good idea in theory, there was a lot of discontent with the current nature and style of the meetings.	13. An independently facilitated discussion should be held to seek agreement as to the most useful purpose and structure for the Liaison meetings. This discussion should also consider the option of having more informal, social meetings for CB/CC members and more topic specific workshops focused on topical Council issues.
14. The structure of the formal six-weekly meetings does not provide a productive platform for discussing important issues with members of the community. The standing orders and the limited amount of time for public comment are barriers for effective public participation.	14. A working party of Councillors, Committee Advisors and Board and Committee Chairs should review the structure of the formal six-weekly meetings with the view to minimising the barriers for public participation, whilst at the same time ensuring that the meeting retains an effective decision-making process.
15. There is precedent for effective power sharing between Councils and Community Boards in Christchurch, Queenstown Lakes District and Taupo District.	15. Hutt City Council should study the models adopted by other Councils when considering the further development of Boards and Committees.

3.   RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The Council's Statement of Intention 2008 regarding 'involving our communities' states that:

Council is committed to supporting and working in partnership with its many diverse communities, both individually and collectively, to strengthen them and create a better City. By understanding our communities' values and aspirations and through that, building strong partnerships, Council seeks to raise levels of trust and confidence, increase social cohesion and realise its vision for the City.

This section of the report provides an outline of the evaluation findings that resulted from the interviews and focus groups conducted for this evaluation. We have closely followed the evaluation objectives as enunciated above. This is followed by a brief discussion (refer Section 4 on page 27) that draws on a study undertaken in August 2008 by Mike Richardson, entitled Setting Community Boards in Context – a report prepared for the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance.

3.1   Objective One

The first objective for this evaluation is to understand how, the way that Council works together with CBs/CCs and the way that CBs/CCs work together with the communities they represent, enables or not, community representation and participation in local decision making processes.

3.1.1   How do CBs/CCs enable community representation and participation in local decision making?

When asked to describe the purpose of CBs/CCs, most members described CBs/CCs as a liaison or conduit between the community and the Council, with some also commenting that they had a role in improving and enhancing the community. Comments from the various CB/CC members included:

> *We act as a liaison between the community and the Council.*

> *We represent the interests of the community and also try and do things to enhance the community and improve community cohesion.*

> *We act as a conduit between communities and the Council … We can raise issues with Council that might otherwise go unnoticed … we can advocate for the community.*

> *Our basic job is to advocate for the community, to be amongst the community, to gather community ideas and thoughts, and to report to the Council. We are also there to build up community spirit.*

Council staff and Councillors interviewed for this evaluation all had similar views as to the role and purpose of the CBs/CCs. One senior Council staff member described the role and purpose as follows:

> *CBs/CCs are at the coal face of the community. They know what's going on in the community.*

A Councillor described the role of CBs/CCs as a "go-between" between local community and Council.

Representatives of community groups who participated in focus groups struggled with describing the role of CBs/CCs. Some plainly had no idea about the existence of CBs/CCs, let alone their role and purpose. Others seemed better informed and, in their role as Chair or member of a community group, have had some or regular dealings with CBs/CCs.

One member of a community group admitted to not knowing anything about CBs/CCs, other than that they administer the Community Engagement Fund. Her group had successfully applied for funding under the scheme.

While all CBs/CCs described a similar purpose, the way that CBs/CCs made this happen in reality differed markedly. The predominant behaviours and nature of the CBs/CCs varied, for example, from a CB/CC keen to have more formal delegations and structure, to a CB/CC that did not want any delegations and was solely focused on community engagement. The other key characteristics that differentiated the various approaches of CBs/CCs can be broadly summarised as follows:

- CBs/CCs that are closely aligned with the Council and councillors versus CBs/CCs who perceived themselves as independent bodies (with a 'them and us' attitude) who played a key role in critiquing and being a watchdog in relation to the Council.

- CBs/CCs with a strong focus on community engagement and working with the community, as opposed to those that have limited engagement with the wider community.

- CBs/CCs that focus a lot on more formal work (including delegations, preparing submissions, commissioning and writing reports) versus a focus on more grassroots community consultation and involvement.

- CBs/CCs that have meeting agendas driven predominantly by the Council staff versus those CBs/CCs that take a more active role in preparing the agenda and writing meeting papers.

- CBs/CCs whose members work together as a cohesive team compared with CBs/CCs where there is some tension between members (often with elected councillors on the CBs/CCs).

- CBs/CCs that have a high profile in their community compared with other CBs/CCs who have a very low profile.

- CBs/CCs that chose to suspend standing orders at most of their formal meetings and those that strictly keep to formal meeting procedures.

While it is clear that the exact focus and nature of each CB/CC will be driven by the priorities of the members themselves, the evaluation identified a number of key factors to explain the varying nature of the CBs/CCs.

- The geographical area that makes up the boundary of the CBs/CCs has a huge impact on the nature and focus of the CB/CC. Some CBs/CCs operate in an area that has a clearly defined community (for example Eastbourne and Wainuiomata), where there is a central focus, and there are a number of community groups and residents associations. The nature of these types of places makes it much easier for CBs/CCs to connect and engage with their local community as there is already a community of common interest, a high degree of social capital, and a sense of place and belonging. In other areas where there isn't already a clear geographical and social community in place, or where a CB/CC covers a range of disparate communities with little in common, it is much harder to engage with an abstract or artificial sense of 'community'.

  According to one CC member:

  > *The community idea is a bit of a fiction for some areas. While it does work in some areas, we've just got these boundaries and they say 'this is your community'. It is not a community at all … We have a lot of disparate entities to deal with … We are told to go and consult with our community, but there is not one community or one entity.*

- Members of CBs/CCs will bring different skills and abilities to their role. A CB/CC which has a predominance of people with a professional or policy background, for example, will have a different focus than a CB/CC dominated by members from a grassroots community background.

- The fact that CBs have elected members and CC members are appointed may impact on the focus and nature of each CB/CC (including the possibility that CC members will have a lower profile in the community as they were not elected). Elected members of a CB argued that they had a stronger mandate to advocate for their community compared to appointed members of a CC. However, members of a CC argued that they were appointed based on their skills and experience and were therefore better placed to work for their community compared to those who were elected.

  > *Anybody can get themselves elected, but that does not mean that you have the skills or experience to do the job.*

- Some CBs/CCs have a number of members who have been on the CB/CC for an extensive length of time and appear to have experienced a significant amount of conflict and/or tension about particular issues. CBs/CCs with a number of long standing members where there had been historical tensions and problems appeared to have a different understanding of the role of the CB/CC (often describing themselves as an independent body) and were not so closely aligned with the Council.

3.1.2 How effective are current communication/engagement processes between Council and CBs/CCs and between CBs/CCs and their communities, and how could they be improved?

Each CB/CC has a number of elected councillors as official members. There were varying views from CB/CC members interviewed as to the effectiveness of this arrangement. A significant number of CB/CC members were positive about having councillors on the CB/CC and saw them as a useful means for getting community issues to Council and they also appreciated councillors sharing information and knowledge with CCs/CBs. According to one CB/CC:

> *We have a good relationship with councillors on the committee. We don't feel it is 'them and us' and they don't try and override us. I have no issues with them; they put us in the right direction as they know more.*

On the other hand, some CB/CC members described a 'them and us' scenario between councillors and CB/CC members with concerns that councillors are more aligned with the council, not the CB/CC. Other concerns mentioned were that councillors were more vocal and stronger at CB/CC meetings and often had their own agendas. According to one CB/CC member:

> *The councillors can be stifling at times, they've been there and done that, if we have new ideas, they will say 'no it has been done before' …. Fresh ideas and the chance to play with new ideas can be stifled [by councillors].*

One Councillor sees their role on the CC as an advisor to other committee members leaving the real debate to non-Councillor members, but providing advice, steering them in the right direction and informing them about Council opinion on certain matters. We are reminded that Councillors appointed to CBs/CCs are full members of the board/committee and sit on the board/committee as a member and not a Councillor.

By contrast, two other Councillors feel very involved in their board and take an active role in all board matters.

In line with these opposing views, there were also different arguments as to whether councillors should have voting rights on CBs/CCs. Some members commented that they should because the CB/CC was all one team, while others thought they should only be in attendance at these meetings. However, one CB/CC member pointed out that it didn't really matter at the moment as CBs/CCs only have limited delegations and therefore do not have a lot of issues to vote on.

> *I don't think it matters if they have voting rights or not because we don't have a lot of delegations so it is not an issue. If we had a lot of spending delegations then it may be different.*

Committee Advisors play a vital role in the communication between CBs/CCs and Council staff and provide a conduit between Council officers and CB/CC Chairs/Deputy Chairs. They strongly encourage Council staff and CB/CC members to keep them informed. Committee Advisors are aware that Chairs and other members of CBs/CCs (particularly the more experienced members) also have direct contact with Council officers and vice versa and as long as they are kept in the loop. Committee Advisors are very agreeable to this practice. Difficulties arise when Council officers do not keep the Committee Advisors informed or authorise work without advising board/committee chairs on what's happening in their patch.

Use of local newspapers
A couple of the CBs/CCs make extensive use of the local newspaper in engaging with the community, not only advertising the date of their next meeting, but also providing names and contact details of board members. They also produce a brief summary of issues under discussion and more often than not a reporter from the local paper is present at the formal meetings to report on their findings.

Other CBs/CCs only advertise their meetings in the Hutt News, which, according to several members of the community interviewed for this research, doesn't necessarily get delivered consistently to all letter boxes in the region.

3.1.3   To what extent does their way of working enable local community planning?

The evaluation considered how CBs/CCs improved community participation in local planning processes. A large number of CB/CC members discussed the difficulties of engaging communities in longer term council planning processes like the annual plan and district plan process. A number mentioned that people were often reactive and would only become involved in council planning processes if there was a specific and immediate issue on their door step. However, many CB/CC members interviewed were positive about the potential for CBs/CCs to use the Local Community Plan process as a tool to engage their local community in council planning processes. According to members interviewed:

> *In the past the group has been pretty ineffectual, but this time we have developed the community plans which are a good vehicle to bring the community together.*

> *If the Local Community Plan is done properly it is a really good way of engaging the community … It has been a real improvement having the community plan as the focus as all the members work together.*

The community plan was also described as a good way of bringing community groups together and facilitating partnerships between different groups in the community.

> *We have achieved things through the community plan and partnerships have formed between organisations. It has brought people together who didn't know each other, like the local Police and Council who were both working on graffiti issues with at risk youths.*

> *The community plan process gives us more power. We could be very specific about what we wanted and the priorities. We talked about community partnerships.*

Members of one CB/CC described how they saw the community plan process as an opportunity to raise their profile in the community and get people involved. They invited community groups together to discuss the plan, had a facilitated community meeting and undertook a survey of young people. However, they, and a number of community groups, expressed disappointment at the low level of community interest and input despite the efforts of the CB/CC to encourage involvement.

One CB/CC member described the community plan as an opportunity for their CB/CC to be proactive, whereas previously they had only been reactive and that it also provided a formal process for the CB/CC to put ideas forward to Council.

While many CB/CC members interviewed were positive about the potential for the community plan process, there were also a number of concerns about how it was working at present. These included the lack of:

- funding to implement the community plan. According to one CB/CC interviewee:

    > *The Council wanted us to develop a plan with ideas and initiatives but there was no funding to implement it. We need extra funding to make it a bit more real and purposeful. I have read about other councils who fund the community plan.*

- time available for community consultation and to develop the plan

- direction on the appropriate level and detail of content and whether the focus is on high level or operational issues.

- feedback from Council and evidence of how the community plans were incorporated into the LTCCP.

According to some CB/CC members:

> *We finished the plan and handed it over to council, but nothing happened.*

> *We used the community plan as a basis for our submissions on the LTCCP. We were disappointed because our things were not taken up and recognised in LTCCP. I would like to think the Local Community Plan would have more impact. The Council needs to show some things from the community plan in the ten year plan. The Council has to show some response to the community plan, even if it just a modest amount of money.*

A similar point was also raised in relation to any proposals, submissions and reports the CC/CB makes to Council. Members were often unclear as to how a CB/CC report was then incorporated into Council planning and decision making. According to one member:

> *The process for getting [CB/CC] decisions accepted at council level is not transparent enough. If we make recommendations to council the [CB/CC] should be able to present that at the Council table. If we write and prepare a proposal we are still not clear how that gets through Council.*

Another member commented:

> *When we write a paper or prepare a submission, we want that presented to Council as we wrote it and not taken to bits by a Council officer and used in the preparation of his own paper. We are confident enough that we can prepare our own submissions and we expect them to be tabled without interference or even as an attachment to someone else's paper.*

By and large, most members of CBs/CCs were enthusiastic about and supportive of Local Community Plans and the move from issues-based community engagement to planning-based engagement. However, as mentioned above, most CBs/CCs have found it a challenge to get the community involved or motivated enough to be involved in long term planning beyond addressing immediate one-off issues.

3.2   Objective Two

Research Objective Two was to investigate the effectiveness of specific mechanisms that support community representation.

3.2.1   What resources, inputs and processes are provided or implemented to support the functioning of CBs/CCs, and are these sufficient to enable CBs/CCs to function efficiently?

CB/CC members interviewed were all very positive about the level of assistance and support received from the Committee Advisors. Council staff in general, were also described as accessible, approachable and happy to provide information that CBs/CCs asked for. The staff were described by one CB/CC member interviewed as 'a real strength of the Council'.

The other key resources identified by CB/CC members were the administration fund of $5,000 per annum and the Community Engagement Fund which is calculated on the basis of 50 cents per head of population in the community. Council recently agreed a training budget of $2000 per Board/Committee. Council also provides the services of an additional administration support person to assist with expenses, travel arrangements, maintaining the meeting calendar and mail-outs. Further assistance is provided in the form of a template when developing Local Community Plans. The Manager, Strategic Development is also available to provide assistance and advice with Local Community Plans.

Each of the CBs/CCs has an information page on the Hutt City website. This contains names and contact details of CB/CC members and a group photograph of each of the boards/committees. The Eastbourne Community Board is the only Community Board that has its own website which they maintain out of their own administration budget.

The Hutt City Council website, www.huttcity.govt.nz received much criticism from respondents, including Councillors, Council staff, CB/CC members and members of the community. It is deemed very user un-friendly, difficult to navigate and the search function "absolutely useless". A project to review the web site is to start in the 2009/10 financial year.

As mentioned above, the Eastbourne Community Board has its own dedicated website, www.eastbourne.huttcity.com. Its menu contains a Home page, Board Meeting Highlights, ECB Basic Principles, What's New, Eastbourne Community Plan, Korohiwa, Link to other sites, Eastbourne photos and Board Speak. It is very functional and the ECB assertively promotes the site to members of the community as another means of engaging with the community. To ECB's chagrin, the website is maintained out of their own administration budget. Several interviewees commented on the difficulties of maintaining a website within the current budget limitations.

Committee Advisors and Council staff are of the opinion that all CBs/CCs should have their own website, linked to Hutt City's website, but maintained by CBs/CCs.

Other resources mentioned in the research include, formal meetings of CBs/CCs and liaison meetings. These will be discussed elsewhere in this report.

When asked about any additional resources that could assist CBs/CCs to function more effectively, the resources most commonly mentioned included:

- A budget for advertising meetings more widely and producing newsletters, flyers and letter box drops.
- Funding to implement initiatives that come out of the community plans.
- A budget for calling additional (public consultation) meetings if needed.
- Additional secretarial services, including typing, photocopying and research.
- A dedicated Committee Advisor for each of the CBs/CCs.
- A permanent office or place to meet.
- Funds to develop and maintain a dedicated website for each of the CBs/CCs.

According to one CB/CC member:

> *The administration fund is not enough. Having one flyer printed and distributed almost exhausted our budget. How are we meant to reach out and engage with people? It is not credible on that budget.*

A key concern for a number of CB/CC members were the discrepancies in budgets across the CBs/CCs and the need for greater fairness per capita. By way of example it was mentioned that a letter box drop in NECC is far more expensive than, for instance, in Eastbourne because of the sizable difference in population.

There was also a difference in the work CB/CCs required from Committee Advisors. At one end of the continuum Committee Advisors are expected to do background research on certain issues in addition to a fairly heavy administration work load and follow up with Officers to ensure they are made aware of issues that Boards/Committees would like addressed. At the other end, the expectation is that the Committee Advisor will organise meetings and assist with Community Engagement Fund and other administrative matters only.

In terms of budget, only one Board has overspent while the other committees/boards have worked within their budget with one committee under spending by $400. It is unclear whether this CB/CC carried out everything it is mandated to do at a lower cost or whether they did not do everything they are mandated to do.

All CBs/CCs are unanimous in their view that the Committee Advisors provide excellent service and are very supportive of CBs/CCs and particularly the Chairs. Good communication was constantly identified as the key to working effectively together, particularly between Council staff and CBs/CCs.

3.2.2   How effective are the liaison meetings between Council and CBs/CCs as a forum to discuss issues?

There were mixed views from CB/CC members on the effectiveness of the liaison meetings with the Council. While some members thought they were effective, others thought they were boring and a 'waste of time'. However, nearly all members interviewed were in agreement that the concept of a liaison meeting was a good idea, but that the current format could be improved.

The key areas identified for improvement from CB/CC members were the need for:

- Greater clarity on the purpose of the meeting. The meeting currently appears to be a mixture of information sharing from Council staff and also an opportunity for CB/CC members to meet and share ideas. Not all members interviewed agreed on what the purpose of the meeting should be, and it was suggested that it would be useful to have a facilitated meeting to discuss and agree on the purpose and structure of future meetings.

- Strong chairing as the meeting often gets hijacked by particular interests and people with strong views. One suggestion was to have a Council staff member facilitate the meeting.

- A separation of the dual purposes of Council information sharing and CB/CC members sharing ideas into two different meetings. A number of CB/CC members suggested that information sharing amongst CB/CC members could be done informally over coffee or a drink.

- More focused, facilitated discussions and workshops on Council issues such as the Vision 2030 session.

According to one CB/CC member:

> *The liaison meetings could be improved. The agenda could be more structured and have more purpose. Or we could have an informal get-together over a drink where people can talk about what they are doing. We need to have opportunities for informal information sharing between CBs/CCs and formal information sharing with Council (there are issues we need to know about). Currently, people bring up broad issues to discuss and want to hijack the meeting.*

The Eastbourne Community Board has recently initiated the Community Project Team, consisting of the Chairs of all five CBs/CCs providing a mechanism to get recommendations through to Council. However, as a recent initiative this was not commented on by other interviewees, so it is unclear whether this is initiative is regarded as an effective tool to discuss relevant issues.

Councillors interviewed for this evaluation commented positively about the liaison meetings as a place of information sharing. Attendance at liaison meetings has improved since it was decided that chairing the meetings should be rotated between CB/CC Chairs and an agenda is prepared beforehand. No decisions are made at liaison meetings. Councillors, Council staff and members of CBs/CCs would like the Mayor to attend these meetings more often.

Committee Advisors do not attend the liaison meetings and the view from other Council staff attending these meetings is mixed. One senior staff member has decided not to attend the liaison meetings anymore because they find them boring and ineffectual.

A common observation from Council staff seems to be that there is a need to have formal meetings for the purpose of decision making, but that these should be followed by smaller informal meetings that are more conducive to information sharing and forward planning. The purpose of the informal meetings would be to discuss the outcome of the formal meetings.

3.2.3   How effective are the public meetings between CBs/CCs and the communities they represent as a forum to discuss issues, and any other specific mechanisms to engage the community?

The six-weekly meetings of the CBs/CCs provide, in theory, an opportunity for communities to express their views and concerns to members. However, most CB/CC members interviewed said that there is usually little (often the same people) or no attendance from members of the public at the meetings unless there is a specific 'hot' local issue that is of relevance to them.

Even when members of the public do attend the meetings, it was widely agreed that the formal meeting structure is not the best environment to encourage community engagement and discussion. The formal standing orders for the meeting allow 30 minutes for public comment only on items that are on the pre-confirmed agenda. Each member of the public can speak for up to three minutes.

According to CB/CC members:

> *The formal standing orders are not the best environment to have discussions, but there are no other options, so it is better than nothing.*

> *The standing orders are a real barrier, you have to get things on the agenda early; you can't just come along and talk.*

If a member of the public does come along with an issue without any knowledge of the standing orders or how to get an item on the agenda before the meeting, there can be little or no opportunity for them to present their views.

The key argument for this arrangement mentioned by a number of members was that Council staff and the CB/CC may not be prepared or know enough

about the topic being raised and therefore they are exposed to risk or embarrassment, or put in an awkward position.

As CB/CC members explained:

> *We have very strict standing orders that allow the public to come and speak for up to three minutes about something on the agenda. It is restricting if someone wants to talk about something that is not on the agenda. They could get it on the agenda, but they probably don't know how. We are looking at changing this and suspending the standing orders so people can talk, we haven't done this before. [The Council] said we can't do this as it catches everyone short and staff don't have time to prepare [a response].*

> *We want communities to be involved in the [CB/CC] but we are limiting them to time. If people come to the meeting you should let them talk. They can currently come to the meeting and talk about something that is on the agenda. But the reality is that people wake up the week before and want to talk about something, but the agenda is already finalised.*

The Chair of one CB/CC regularly passes a resolution at the beginning of the meeting and suspends the standing orders so that members of the public are not restricted to the 30 minutes for public discussion or to items on the agenda. Some other CBs/CCs said they had not suspended standing orders, but would be prepared to do so if someone came along with an issue to discuss that was outside of the agenda.

Some CB/CC members suggested the formal meetings were not very effective as a means of encouraging community engagement as the agenda was often dominated by issues the Council wanted the CBs/CCs' opinion on, or wanted to keep them informed on, and therefore there was little opportunity for broader or proactive discussion and debate on community issues.

The nature of the formal meetings in terms of the standing orders, the full agenda with a focus on Council reports, and the lack of public attendance appear to limit the value of these meetings as an effective tool for community engagement.

As one CB/CC member noted:

> *We try to encourage people to come along, but the meetings are so boring, especially when people can't say anything. Why would they want to come along?*

According to another CB/CC member:

> *Our meetings are about 25 percent effective. The public still don't really know about us. We are thinking about having separate informal meetings where people can come along and air their views about issues. The formal meetings are already pre-planned, everything is already said and done before the meeting. We are there for three hours and people can only speak for 30 minutes, after that it's closed. People don't come because it's not user friendly.*

The formal nature and environment of these meetings is also off-putting to some members of the community. Particularly meetings held in Council chambers with its formal setting and seating arrangements and imposing microphones which are not conducive to community participation. Many members of the community are not used to public speaking or public meetings and an imposing, formal environment does not help.

Some CBs/CCs have their formal meetings in the same venue, whereas others change venues regularly in an effort to get closer to local communities within their catchment area and encourage wider public participation. There is no evidence, that moving venues has had the desired result of increasing public participation. In fact, the opposite often appears to be the case as it can add to confusion by members of the public about where the meeting is being held.

Councillors and Council staff agree that the structure of the formal meetings does not provide a productive platform of discussing important issues with members of the community. The standing orders and the limited amount of time for public comment are obvious barriers for effective public consultation.

Committee Advisors believe that it is necessary that the formal meetings are structured by way of standing orders as without them there is a real potential that meetings turn to chaos, particularly if the Chair is inexperienced in running public meetings. They do however agree that the time allocated for public comment is insufficient and suggest a better result may be had by arranging regular informal meetings.

> *Informal public meetings are more effective in regards to consultation with the community, but it must be remembered that no decisions can be made at these informal meetings.*

Aside from the formal public meetings, a number of other mechanisms have been used by CBs/CCs to encourage community engagement including:

- Some CBs/CCs allocate members to particular residents associations and community groups and they are required to liaise with these groups, attend their meetings and identify any issues to bring to the CBs/CCs attention. This works more effectively in some areas where there are many community groups to engage with, while in other areas there appear to be none.

- One CB/CC has an informal clinic every month where they have a table set up at the local shopping mall and encourage people to come and talk. People generally come along for a chat or to complain about something and the clinic provides an opportunity for members to build relationships with their community. One member was relatively happy with the feedback received from the community at the informal clinic with other members suggesting that it helps that if a person has a relatively high profile person in the community and therefore people are comfortable to approach them.

- A member of another Community Board tried a similar approach with very limited success although this was only for "a few weeks" before giving it away. Members suggested that perhaps this is something that requires more time before it catches on with people and they gather the courage to stop and chat, especially with a person they do not know (very well).

- Two other CBs/CCs mentioned they had informally walked through their local shopping area (wearing their badges) and talked with people by way of raising the profile of the CB/CC.

- One CB/CC holds regular informal meetings of members in order to discuss priorities for engaging with the community and allocate work. A number of CB/CC members on other committees said they would also like to do this, as the full formal meeting agenda means there is little time to talk about what they want to do as a board/committee.

- Many members are also involved in a range of other community groups and use their roles in these groups as an opportunity to talk about the work of the CC/CB.

- One CB/CC did a letter box drop, asked people to go online and fill out a questionnaire about their community, and invited them to be part of a citizens' panel. They now have a panel of 140 individuals who they can communicate with very easily and can quickly find out their views on Council issues. The online survey was initiated by Central West CC and they received funding from the Council of $1,000.

- Some CBs/CCs have had special issues meetings when there is a particularly topical or 'hot' issue in the community.

- Other tools used by CBs/CCs include websites, local newspaper columns, emails to groups and regular library displays.

However, a number of CB/CC members expressed frustration and disappointment at the low level of engagement from communities despite their efforts. A number commented that people will often choose to contact the Council or councillors direct rather than work through the CB/CC. Therefore, there were still questions from members about whether the boards and committees could engage more effectively with local communities. According to one CB/CC member:

> *At the end of the day, are we meeting the needs of our local community? If not, we need to find out why we are not meeting their needs, and how we do meet their needs.*

3.2.4   How effective are CBs/CCs at engaging with groups that may be under-represented in local decision-making processes (e.g. youth, Mäori or older people)?

A number of CB/CC members commented that the people who do attend the formal meetings tend to be older, middle class, and European/Pakeha. They were described as people who have the time and who are more comfortable with the formal meeting processes. A number of CB/CC members noted a gap in their engagement with youth, Mäori and Pacific peoples and lower socio-economic families.

A few CB/CC members mentioned the difficulties of involving youth, particularly getting youth input into the community plans. The long timeframes of council, the red tape, and their general lack of interest in politics were given as reasons for this difficulty. One CB/CC had put a questionnaire out to young people through a youth organisation with the findings feeding into the plan. Another CB/CC had tried to seek feedback from a youth worker for the community plan with limited success. One CB was interested in talking to schools in order to raise awareness of the CB/CC in the community.

One CB/CC had made an effort to reach out to lower socio-economic groups and Mäori and Pacific peoples (who have traditionally been under-represented in local government decision-making) through churches, community groups and advertising. However, they have had limited success as one CB/CC member, who works in a community house, explains that often people on low incomes have other more immediate priorities and therefore do not have the time or inclination to engage in council processes and therefore it is difficult to connect with them.

A few CB/CC members were keen to involve under-represented groups in CB/CC processes, to be approachable and provide a voice for these groups. However, they found it difficult to know how to best achieve this and felt hampered by the 'red tape' which often made CB/CC processes formal and intimidating to communities.

A representative of a community group working with Mäori commented in a focus group on an experience that left them (a group of Mäori) quite disillusioned about the Council process and particularly of not "being heard". They turned up at a Council meeting with a proposal and without much discussion their proposal was dismissed. She acknowledged that their proposal may not have been as well prepared as could be, but the fact that they were not allowed to state their case in full was a bitter disappointment, particularly, because they had not followed due process.

> *I can handle being turned down. What I can't handle is the fact that it was dismissed out of hand without much discussion.*

It is important to note that this discussion was in relation to a meeting of the Council, not a meeting of a CB/CC.

By and large, CBs/CCs have not found it easy to engage with groups that are under-represented in the community – not for lack of trying, but some of these groups have not shown a great deal of interest and, more often than not, they tend to by-pass CBs/CCs and go straight to the Council or a Council officer. From the focus groups with community representatives we learned that many of the community groups have existing and sometimes long standing relationships with Councillors and/or Council staff and that seems to work well for them.

3.2.5   What are the training needs of CB/CC members, and how could these be effectively addressed?

A number of CB/CC members were very supportive of the induction process and support they received at the beginning of their tenure. Many were aware that there was a new proposed training policy, but were unaware of what stage it was at and whether there would be a budget attached to it.

Training was not a huge issue for members of CBs/CCs, particularly the more experienced members. However, they could see the need for first term members. Some first term members displayed an unmistaken frustration serving on a board or committee, mainly fuelled by an early realisation that their desire to "make a difference" was going to take a back seat. They were clearly unfamiliar with new terminologies and concepts and for some the learning curve was frustratingly steep. The strict regime of the formal meetings did not help ease their discomfort.

> *I just want to get things done and all I seem to be doing is attending long boring meetings and read wordy reports.*

3.3   Objective Three

To review the delegation of the Council's functions to CBs/CCs.

3.3.1   Are the agreed functions and delegations well understood, and applied consistently across CBs/CCs?

Most CB/CC members interviewed appeared to have a good understanding of the delegations to CBs/CCs. However, some of the newer members struggled with the delegations, which has also become a source of frustration. They have been appointed or elected to a committee or board with certain ideals and a desire to make a difference only to find that they "waste their time discussing minor and seemingly unimportant issues".

Some of the CBs/CCs appear to limit their activities to solely "administering delegations", whereas others look to stretch delegations to the maximum as a means of putting their own stamp on decision making. One CB/CC openly admits not to "worry too much about delegations" as they see their role primarily as community advocacy. Whilst they appear to have a very good understanding of delegations, they argue that good process negates the need to have narrowly prescribed delegations.

The Community Engagement Fund was the most commonly discussed delegation. CBs/CCs were overwhelmingly positive about this fund as it gives them an opportunity to connect with different community groups they traditionally might not have had anything to do with and helps to raise the profile of the CB/CC.

The Community Engagement Fund was often the catalyst for members of the community to learn about the existence of CBs/CCs. They may not have been aware of CBs/CCs until they found out about the Community Engagement Fund and applied for a grant under the scheme. One member of a community group interviewed for this evaluation admitted of not knowing the purpose of CBs/CCs other than giving out grants to community groups.

3.3.2   Are the current delegations (the functions and level of delegation) appropriate to achieve the overall outcome of improved community participation in local decision making, and how could/should the delegations or their implementation be improved?

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the predominant behaviours and nature of the CBs/CCs varied from CBs/CCs keen to have more formal delegations and structure, to others that do not want any delegations and were solely focused on community engagement.

While most CB/CC members had a clear understanding of the function and responsibilities associated with delegations, this appeared to be a very small

part of the overall workload for most CBs/CCs. Some CBs/CCs were concerned that the number of delegations had declined over recent times and were very aware of other CBs/CCs in the country that have much higher level delegations (refer discussion on governance agreement between Wanaka Community Board and Queenstown Lakes District on p27 and following pages of this report).

Some Councillors may be reluctant to extend wider delegated powers to CBs/CCs, particularly after one incident involving dog controls went wrong causing the Council to remove delegations on dog control from CBs/CCs.

A number of CB/CC members associated the lack of delegations with a lack of power to participate in local decision making. There was also a concern that if a CB/CC didn't have delegations they would not know what Council decision making was happening in their local area.

According to one CB/CC member:

> *I want the [CB/CC] to be more prescriptive, we've always argued for more delegations. [Another CC/CB] argues against delegations, they are advocates for the community. I would prefer to be told what to do, it is currently too vague. I want more delegations. If we had more delegations we would be more accountable. We want more structure.*

However, as mentioned in the above quote, others saw delegations as detracting from their key focus of community engagement and proactive work with the community, including the development and implementation of the community plans.

As one CB/CC member noted:

> *We have very few delegations; we are not that keen on delegations, they can take away your major advocacy role. We hardly ever bother about delegations; we like to think that we are more effective because we are not dealing with delegations.*

3.3.3 Does the delegation of Council functions support the intended principles, in particular efficient decision-making and decisions being made as close as possible to a specific relevant community?

Refer Section 4 on page 27.

3.3.4 How effective are CBs/CCs in carrying out their role of advocacy for their respective communities?

All participants in this evaluation were asked the question about their opinion of the overall effectiveness of CBs/CCs in advocating for their respective communities. Whilst the individual responses to this question varied from person to person, there appears to be a general school of thought that

CBs/CCs have the ability to be more effective, provided changes are made to the way they operate, the circumstances under which they operate and the limited resources they have available to them. One Council officer puts it as follows:

> *CBs/CCs are not very effective with the way things are structured. The meetings are very bureaucratic and do not allow for an open forum to discuss visions etc. It is process driven.*

One Councillor responded to this question by asking two questions in return:

> *How effective are CBs/CCs in engaging with the community and how willing is the Council in taking their advice?*

In answering the first question the Councillor concluded that some CBs/CCs are more effective in liaising with the community than others. Several factors contribute to this:

- Some community boards are more natural communities of interest than others, mainly because of the area being defined by natural geographic boundaries. Others are an amalgam of communities artificially joined together with no or very little common interest.

- Some of the boards/committees have a clear focus on community advocacy and community engagement, whereas others are more focused on administering delegations and dealing with one-off issues.

- Some CBs/CCs have developed strong relationships with community groups, particularly residents associations, whereas others are still coming to grips with the various community groups in their area (or some did not appear to have any community groups at all in their areas).

- Those who are elected to represent their community may have a more natural affinity to engage with their community than those who have been appointed on the strength of their CV.

ECB and NECC frequently liaise with representatives of other community groups, particularly Residents Associations. Residents Associations have a "slot" in ECB's formal meeting and members of the NECC have been allocated certain community groups and nominated members attend the meetings of these community groups.

However, it was acknowledged by everybody involved in this evaluation that it is not easy to get the community interested, let alone involved in community debates, unless it is a particular issue that affects the community or certain members of the community. An example was given about a bus stop that had been in a particular location on Muritai Road in Eastbourne for several decades, in front of a residential dwelling, when it was damaged beyond repair by a backing truck and had to be replaced. The home owner made several (unsuccessful) submissions to the Eastbourne Community Board to have the bus stop removed to another spot, away from his property.

Another example is the preservation and restoration of the Eastbourne bus barns at the southern end of Muritai Road. Several members of the community obviously felt very strongly about the preservation of these buildings and made successful submissions to the ECB, who in turn took up the cause with the Council, resulting in a $2.2million budget allocation. Walter Nash Stadium in NE ward and the McKenzie Pool in Petone are other examples where members of the community got behind these projects resulting in positive action.

However, getting the community involved in planning for the future or advocating for the area in more general terms requires an enormous effort from CB/CC members, residents associations and other community groups.

In respect of Council's willingness to accept advice from CBs/CCs or even listen to their viewpoint, there seemed some doubts about this. This is what one Councillor had to say:

> *The Council is not comfortable with listening to CBs/CCs. Some Councillors suffer CBs/CCs' existence, whereas others are willing to listen. [...] is probably the best at listening and taking advice from CBs/CCs. Council is getting better at listening, but they have a long way to go. The secession issue initiated by an Eastbourne community group opened their eyes and particularly the Mayor took greater interest in CBs/CCs.*

Another Councillor believes that boards are more effective than committees because committees do not consist of a (natural) community of common interest. A third Councillor agreed with that.

Other factors limiting the effectiveness of CBs/CCs include the lack of authority, power and the lack of budget. One Councillor puts it this way:

> *If Council is serious about CBs/CCs they would give them sufficient budget, delegations, powers and authority. If not, you are wasting your time.*

He adds:

> *If there is no political will to share power with CBs/CCs and give them more authority and budget we might as well abolish them, because in the current set-up they are not effective.*

Committee Advisors concede that the formal meetings are not very effective, mainly because of the limited amount of time available for public comment and the restrictions put on members of the community that allow them only to speak on issues on the agenda. Also the Standing Orders are not conducive for public debate on issues.

All CBs/CCs acknowledge that Committee Advisors provide very useful support for CBs/CCs, however, according to Committee Advisors, not all Chairs are known for readily accepting advice and support. Some Chairs have to be taken by the hand and rely very heavily on the advice and guidance of Committee Advisor. Others act fairly independently and frequently sidestep advice.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   Getting the community involved

Advocating for the community and getting the community involved is not an easy mission unless an individual or group of individuals is strongly motivated by a particular issue. Beyond that there is a lot of apathy. This is not limited to Hutt City; this is a widespread phenomenon in the developed world. People are generally prepared to give up their free time to sports and recreation, but when it comes to community development it is left to a precious few.

CBs/CCs have to work hard to break through this apathy by being creative and adopting a multi-method approach to consultation. The Council in turn needs to put the CBs/CCs in a position that they can be effective by providing adequate resources – financial, support and authority.

This evaluation has shown that financial resources, particularly the administration budget are minimal, bordering on inadequate. Support, particularly from Council staff, is excellent. Support from Councillors (with the exception of a few) is sadly lacking. Authority, CBs/CCs have none or very little.

Getting the community interested and motivated to participate in local planning is a question of time, awareness raising and budget. It takes a **persistent effort** over a sustained period of time to motivate members of the community to devote some of their preciously scarce spare time in helping to develop a vision for their community. It also takes inspirational leadership of local leaders to spearhead and promote initiatives that resonate with the community. Some of the CB/CC Chairs are inspiring leaders who have the skills, experience and drive to lead their community into the future.

It also requires **awareness raising**. The community needs to be made aware that participation in local decision making is a democratic right and they need to be provided with information on how they can get involved. This can be done by holding (informal) public meetings, community clinics, surveys, distributing mail-outs or letter box drops, email circulars and electronic feedback forums (like the citizens panel) and any other creative way of inviting the public to participate. Just doing one of the above activities from time to time is not good enough; it requires a multi-faceted approach aimed at reaching members of the community as often as possible.

Reaching members of the community requires a **budget**. On the assumption that money is always scarce a happy medium will need to be reached about the right size of the budget. Currently, CBs/CCs have an annual administration budget of $5,000. That does not buy a lot of community engagement and a review of the budget is warranted.

Lastly, there has to be the **political will** to promote effective community participation in local decision making via the CB/CC system. Doubt has been

expressed by Council staff, members of CBs/CCs and even Councillors whether that will is widely present in Council. It appears that some Councillors would rather see CBs/CCs disappear from the scene and others reluctantly tolerate them. Others are staunch advocates. Uniform buy-in by Council is a minimum requirement for the system and structure to work and perhaps it is time for Council to engage in some careful consideration of the role and purpose of CBs/CCs and how to make it work effectively. Council will have to address the issue of power sharing. It is an undisputed fact that some Councillors are very reluctant to give more power to CBs/CCs, yet relevant literature suggests that there is evidence that effective power sharing can work very well to the benefit of the entire community.

Mike Richardson, the author of Setting Community Boards in Context[3], cites several examples where Community Boards have exercised significant delegated decision-making powers. He has analysed several examples, including Queenstown Lakes District, Christchurch and Taupo.

Taupo District has only one community board, Turangi – Tongariro (TT). The board meets in Turangi, almost an hour's drive from Taupo. Obviously the distance between Taupo and Turangi makes it easier to consider it a community of common interest in more ways than one and allocating extensive powers to the board seems quite logical under the circumstances. The TT Community Board is a separate rating area. Most services delivered in TT are funded from within the community and only a minority are funded district wide. Once the (Local Community) Plan has been adopted the Board implements most spending under delegated authority from the Council.

Richardson (2008) noted that a senior Taupo District Council staff member who works closely with the Board had made the following observations on why the CB is effective:

- There is a clear geographical separation, Turangi being 55km south of Taupo.

- Turangi has its own community of interest and is different in character to Taupo town.

- There is strong leadership from the Board Chair.

- The rating area has been able to support itself and willing to increase its rates to achieve goals.

- Taupo Council officers have repeatedly underestimated the area Turangi serves and the travel required to do this.

On the face of it none of these observations apply to CBs/CCs in Hutt district, with the exception, perhaps, of strong Board leadership. Nevertheless, absence of these characteristics does not validate not giving more delegated power to CBs/CCs in Hutt district.

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3   Mike Richardson (2008) *Setting Community Boards in Context.* A report prepared for the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance. Salt & Light IHS Limited.

The Wanaka Community Board (WCB) [Queenstown Lakes District] has a *"highly detailed governance agreement and set of delegations that in nature reflect a partnership between two elected bodies of similar standing ..."*, according to Richardson (2008, page 23). The Council treats WCB as a partner in governance of the District and, where possible the Council will give maximum delegation to the WCB, where the community board is taking financial accountability for the decisions involved.

This model may go beyond what Hutt City Council would ever be prepared to consider for its CBs/CCs, but it shows that there are other ways of sharing power.

Christchurch City has six urban community boards all with populations of around 60,000 and two rural boards. What is interesting is that each of the communities represents an amalgam of neighbourhoods, comprising several commercial centres. This is because Christchurch has no natural (internal community) boundaries within the City.

Apart from size, the "artificial" communities in Christchurch appear similar to the "artificial" communities of the Community Committees in Hutt District. However, people living in the Christchurch communities clearly identify with their (Community Board) community, despite decades of association with some dozen communities of interest at a more local scale (Richardson, 2008, p24). The same cannot be said for the communities in Central West or North East in Hutt district. Residents in the western hills don't have a great deal in common with people from the old Central Ward. The Community Committees have not succeeded in pulling these communities together. In their defence, these committees were established less than two years ago and it can take time, a long time, to create a community of common interest. That being the case, it is the Council's responsibility to provide the CCs with adequate tools and resources to try and achieve this.

Why does it work so well in Christchurch? Community Boards have extensive delegations and accountabilities. The boards were delegated responsibility for implementing all capital works in their area, other than those defined as "major" or "metropolitan". Boards had delegated authority to enter into contracts up to $500,000.

Another reason is that Service Centres set up by the Christchurch City Council for each board were empowered to giving a high level of service to boards and the community. Each Service Centre is led by a "community advocate". A member of the Council's senior management also liaises with the board and attends board meetings. It is clear that Christchurch City Council sees benefit in empowering community boards by following through with appropriate delegations and resources. CBs/CCs in Hutt district are largely process driven and it could be argued that their resources are minimal, with limited authority and limited power.

4.2   Of delegations and participation in decision making

There does not appear to be a direct link between delegations and the desired outcome of improved participation in local decision making - they are two different issues. It would be false to assume that community participation in local decision making would improve by extending the range and level of delegations alone, without the (political) will by Council to engage in genuine power sharing. Looking at each of the issues in more detail:

4.2.1   Delegations

Currently, CBs/CCs can decide on a small number of fairly insignificant set of ad hoc delegations; hardly issues that inspire thinking people to contribute to a grand vision for their local community and generally not something the community and community leaders get very excited about. Consideration should be given to "beefing up" the delegations to include reserves, amenity areas, water supply, sewage and drainage, footpaths, street lighting, traffic management, waste management, camping grounds, community centres recreation and social programmes. We believe a review of the current delegations is warranted.

4.2.2   Community participation in decision making – a need for power sharing

It has been said in this evaluation that in some cases there is not a great deal of trust between Council (some Councillors) and CBs/CCs (certain members of boards and committees). Some Councillors, it is suggested, would rather not have CBs/CCs and prefer a system based on ward representation in Council Chamber.

Forty six out of the seventy three City and District Councils throughout New Zealand have Community Boards at the present time, whereas twenty seven Councils have elected not to establish boards (Richardson, 2008, p10). The scope of this evaluation does not include an evaluation of the relative efficacy of community participation with and without community boards; suffice to say both systems work, no doubt with their respective short comings.

Hutt City Council has three community boards and two community committees and the overarching question in this evaluation is how effective are CBs/CCs and what needs to be done to improve community participation in Council decision making in the current system.

Given the current system, there is obviously a need for Council and CBs/CCs to develop mutual trust and work in a cooperative manner. Council staff, Councillors and members of CBs/CCs have often talked about a "them and us" situation in respect of the relationship between Council and CBs/CCs. We believe that there is a role for the Mayor, CEO and Councillors (as members of CBs/CCs) to promote "togetherness" and possibly use the liaison meetings as a platform for promoting and developing closer cooperation.

One Councillor has said that if Council is serious about CBs/CCs they should be given sufficient budget, delegations, powers and authority. If Council is unwilling to do that "we are all wasting our time". This Councillor is also of the opinion that if the present structure prevails, there should be no need for CBs/CCs.

There is precedent for effective power sharing between Councils and Community Boards and there is good reason for Hutt City Council to study the models adopted in Christchurch, Queenstown Lakes District and Taupo District. Whilst each of the three Councils has had different reasons for adopting their power sharing model, regardless of those reasons, the model seems to work and there is nothing to suggest that a similar model would not work in Hutt City, as long as there is the will to make it work.