2013 Rates and Services Review

Outputs from the
Community Working Group
Meeting 3
11 September 2013

Contents

Introduction

The third meeting of the group was held on Wednesday 11 September 2013 in the Level 2 Function Room, Administration Centre, 137 Beamish Street Campsie. Sixteen members of the Canterbury Community participated. One new member attended, invited to supplement the eastern area of the City.

The meeting comprised:
- A recap of the first meeting, and comments from the group on the outputs
- Review and amendment of the shared definition of the challenge facing council
- Brainstorming of possible strategies to solve the problem

The outputs from these activities are presented in this document.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the group will be held on Wednesday 9th October 2013. The topic for this meeting will be:

- **Values and Criteria** – what do we value as a community? What are our priorities? What services and levels of service do we need to achieve these priorities? What are the criteria for a good solution?

Shared Definition of the Challenge

After discussion the shared definition of the challenge facing council was amended to:

*How can council maintain the services needed to **improve the high** quality of life in Canterbury, keep costs down and find alternative sources of income so that rates can be kept as low as possible, and clearly demonstrate the need for any increase in rates?*

Brainstorm Ideas for Service Groups

Process

Service profiles for sixteen different service areas were distributed during the night, in groups of four. The service profiles are available in a separate document.

Participants first worked in table groups and then reported their ideas back to the larger group. They were asked to consider the following in relation to the service profiles:

- What does council deliver in this service area?
- How much does this service cost in terms of the overall budget?
- How much is funded by rates and other sources
- How important is this service area?

They were then asked to brainstorm possible strategies to solve the challenge, thinking specifically about the service areas and their income, service levels (quantity of outputs), and costs.

They were asked to phrase their ideas as '**What if we…?**'

Their ideas are presented on the following pages.

Ideas in a bigger font means more people mentioned this idea.

At the next meeting on the 9th of October, criteria for evaluating these ideas will be developed. Then at the meeting on the 13th November 2013, the ideas will be evaluated and several specific options for solving the challenge facing council will be developed.

Ideas

Roads and Footpaths
• Charge fees for parking on streets, especially in main streets, and in council car parks (free for a suitable time, charge thereafter).
• Review main street parking time limits and shorten if possible, increased turnover, better for businesses.
• Increase charges to developers for footpath crossings
• Achieve reduced infrastructure costs with better design
• Get rid of traffic calming devices
• Be more selective about where footpaths are built or rebuilt (not for less used paths)
• Hold an event (Fun Run) along the Cooks River where council can charge an entry fee.
• Outsource roads and footpaths maintenance and improvements
• Charge a toll on the roads.
• Cycle ways – user fees for cyclists – probably state government to develop a representative fee structure as an income stream

Comments on level of service:
- Pavement condition is generally OK – but we do not want it to deteriorate any further
- Footpaths need attention to existing deteriorated surfaces
- Footpaths are important to be maintained.
- People go to other shopping centres because of lack of parking.

Children's Services
• Review user fees to compare and make sure they are similar to other private centres in the LGA. Increase the fee structure to break even. The services shouldn't be subsidised by rates.
• Audit how well-used the services are and consider reducing the less-used services.
• Look for ways to get better utilisation of centres on weekends to generate income
• Non-residents should pay more for child-care services
• Reduce Family Day Care?

Comments on level of service:
- People can't afford to pay for child care costs. Need state and federal support. Pre-schools are very important.
- We can't cut this.
- Council shouldn't subsidise by charging lower fees than the rest of the market.

Environmental Protection
• Promote environmental outcomes, and support local environmental volunteer groups (will save council in the long run) eg. increase community volunteers to reduce street litter
• Involve young people more to improve environmental outcomes eg. link schools to environmental protection programs and activities including community gardens.
• Dial a dumper to reduce waste going into the river (stop illegal dumping)
• Encourage not using plastic bags.
• Encourage not using air-conditioners.
• Shift education to lower cost methods eg. web based.
• Seek more grants

Comments on level of service:
- Expand environmental protection

Urban Planning and Development Control
• Charge more for development assessment, increase DA fees.
• Spend money on investigations to get more fine income, increase fines on boarding houses and dwellings where there is over-crowding.
• Outsource development assessment
• Offer development assessment services to neighbouring councils

Parks and Sporting Facilities
• Increase contributions from sporting clubs to cover the cost of operations and maintenance of the fields.
• Lease or licence space in parks to cafes and food businesses to generate income eg. dog parks, Tasker Park, Wiley Park
• Promote more casual and seasonal use where we can charge for the use eg. via website
• Charge for parking in established parking areas around parks eg. install local area parking meters around Belmore Sports Ground
• Obtain sponsorship and commercial advertising for parks sports fields and golf course
• Reduce council contribution to golf course
• Do a review of parks to see which are the most popular, and consider sale of under-utilised ones. Use the funds for general purposes, not necessarily solely for parks). Scotts Reserve – nobody uses it – what if it was sold off?
• Seek volunteers to maintain parks.

Community Centres and Programs
• Review the charges for hall hire
• Address the barriers (eg. insurance) for community access to halls and centres
• Outsource cleaning and building maintenance
• Encourage community groups to incorporate as an association so they can raise membership fees and contribute to operational costs
• Rationalise the number of buildings and centres
• Encourage corporate sponsorship of community groups to provide an income to assist with running costs of the centres (eg. Tour Companies for Seniors)

Waste and Recycling Collection
• Review the level of waste charges to units (possibly increase to be same as others?)
• Free pre-booked collection service – could introduce a small charge
• Halve the free pre-booked clean up collections (1 per year instead of 2)
• Review greenwaste service for multi unit dwellings – do they need the same as single dwellings?
• Be more selective about red bins needing to be picked up weekly – perhaps some don't need to be?
• Better education to get recyclables out of the waste stream.
• Communal garage sale (aka Garage Sale Trail) to reduce kerbside clean up.
• Have a credit system for taking your rubbish elsewhere (eg. TV to Addison Road / Reverse Garbage). Get say 15 credits and get something back. If cost to council is $200 to dispose, X credits = $ discount on council services eg. cheap pool entry, rates.
• Separate food waste collection service
• Collect scrap metal at a central point, earn income from it.
• Make money on collecting electronic waste
• Incorporate the costs of street cleaning and maintenance into waste and recycling area to reduce the pressure on rates

Economic and Town Centres Development

- Lease or licence spaces along the Cooks River where people can spend money on food and drink, such as cafes bars and restuarants, and earn an income from this, eg. Tasker Park. Along with this investigate ways to increase the use of River during weekdays (it is already quite busy on weekends). To make it an attraction, it will need more investment across the whole catchment – can we learn from Parramatta.
- Increase the number of filming applications. Sell our CALD character as an attraction.
- Support business profitability and income, and attract new businesses to Canterbury, to increase better local jobs, and increase our community's capacity to pay increased rates.
- Ask businesses to contribute to town centre improvements.
- Introduce metered kerbside parking to increase turnover in spaces in town centres.
- Introduce metered parking also in council-owned car parks.
- Seek more grants for economic development to reduce reliance on rates.

Cultural Events and Programs

- Attract larger events with a higher profile to attract more sponsorship, and result in less cost to council eg. Bangladeshi New Year (Olympic Park).
- Increase sponsorship.
- Increase the stall holder fees.
- Be transparent, and ensure the community understands the cost of putting on festivals.
- Use business rates to pay for festivals.
- Hand over the running of events and festivals to commercial operator to achieve no cost to council.
- Reduce the number of festivals.
- Reduce the scope of festivals, less fancy, no fireworks.
- Recover cost from Federal Government for naturalisation.

Community Health and Safety

- Install more energy efficient street lighting eg. LED – it has a high upfront cost but can save money in the long run.
- Outsource cleaning of public toilets.
- Investigate sensor lighting for street lighting.
- Investigate solar power for street lights.
- Increase fines for food inspections.

Aquatic Centres
• **Close pools during quieter periods such as winter, staggering the closures, and closing outdoor pools leaving the indoor pools open.**
• **Review fee structure to improve cost recovery, including increased introducing "membership" packages and increased entry fees**
• Outsource the management of the aquatic centres.
• Reduce maintenance costs.
• Investigate leasing of areas of the aquatic centres for income generating activities.

Civic Leadership and Governance
• Increase internal audits to find efficiencies.
• Reduce the cost of council meetings eg. limit staff attendance at meetings (although staff are not paid overtime).

Libraries
• Investigate charging for family history service
• Increase rates not to reduce library services
• Review fines and library charges (automatic fines via credit card for late returns)
• Reduce human librarians and move toward online librarians
• Seek increased state government funding for library services
• Seek philanthropic support for libraries
• Seek donation of private collections to libraries, especially CALD resources
• Establish specialised libraries eg. childrens, history, CALD in certain collections, less overlapping
• Use more ebooks, less printed books
• Focus on basics that library must have
• Rent out library space for short courses
• Security deposit for lost of destroyed items
• Membership to cover administration costs

Community information and Engagement
• Provide more information via the website to reduce customer telephone enquiries and visits, arrange the information so it is easier to find, make it more interactive, targeted at customer needs, using navigation pathways, and add a question and answer guide to the home page.
• Charge more for maps and mapping services
• Spend more money on community education
• More communication via social media

Street cleaning and maintenance
• Increase fine income through increased policing of dumped rubbish, eg. CCTV cameras at dumped rubbish hot spots to catch and fine dumpers
• Review the need for street sweeping, eg. reduce sweeping to just town centres
• Change grassed nature strips to low maintenance native shrubs and grasses
• Review the need for council to provide sideline mowing
• Provide more legal walls for graffiti to reduce cost of removal in other areas.
• Provide more education to decrease graffiti
• Look for services that will remove abandoned vehicles for free
• Promote the use of a community based op-shop eg. Salvos or Vinnies (like RRRC in Marrickville) to reduce tipping costs

Council Operations
• Pay staff fortnightly or monthly, and use electronic payslips
• Issue rates notices by email to reduce postage costs – estimate $100,000 savings
• Streamline stores and inventory
• Train staff to level of need (no unnecessary training)
• Integrate website updates into IT to achieve efficiency
• Purchase Australian made vehicles and plant (where practical)
• Rationalise creditor and supplier payments, reduce the number of invoice payments
• Put a hold on salary performance payments
• Outsource Information Technology
• Review fees for council leases and licences to obtain more income
• Use the garage for commercial operations to earn income
• Reduce the use of paper, increase use of online applications
• Set up direct debit for rate payments and charge those who choose not to direct debit a fee (such as done by Telstra etc.)
• Introduce late payment fees for rates

All of the ideas mentioned at the meeting have been included in some way or another in the above lists. They have not been filtered, assessed for feasibility, or evaluated for their suitability in achieving a solution to the challenge facing council.

Criteria for a good solution will be developed at the next Community Working Group meeting on the 9th of October. At the same time council staff will assess the degree of difficulty and likely financial impact of these ideas. At the Community Working Group meeting on the 13th November 2013, these ideas will be assessed against the criteria and several specific options for solving the challenge facing council will be developed.