

2013 Rates and Services Review Engagement Program Update for the Project Steering Group - August 2013

Introduction

This report provides a brief update on progress of the 2013 Rates and Services Review Engagement Program.

Community Working Group

Recruitment

After a request for quotations from three independent research organisations (Action Market Research, Jetty Research and IRIS Research) IRIS were selected to recruit a deliberative working group. They recruited 36 community members with an appropriate gender, age, and geographical distribution.

Meeting 1

The first meeting of the group was held on 1 August and was attended by twenty people. At this meeting we introduced the group to the engagement program and the issue. In response the group developed a list of questions about council rates and services, and we prepared answers to these questions for discussion at the next meeting. Outputs from the meeting and the answers to questions are attached.

At the first meeting the group decided that the name Deliberative Working Group didn't work for them, and they decided to test the name Community Working Group.

Meeting 2

The second meeting was held on 20 August 2013 and was attended by only twelve people. Ten people who attended the first meeting were unable to attend, and two new members, invited to supplement the 18-29 age group, did attend. The low attendance was attributed to the fact that prior to the first meeting all participants were called by phone several times in the week prior to the meeting, however, this did not happen prior to the second meeting. We will ensure that reminder calls are made in the week prior to all future meetings.

At the second meeting the answers to the questions from the first meeting were reviewed and discussed. There was then a discussion around three scenarios for service reductions and rate increases, leading to a discussion and development of a shared definition of the challenge facing council. Outputs from this meeting are attached.

The following items emerged as common themes as to what is important to participants when considering the impact of reducing the services council provides.

- Quality of life
- Community spirit
- Health
- Safety
- Village atmosphere
- Economic prosperity
- Civic pride
- Diversity
- Wellbeing of others
- Small business character
- Green space
- Environment

A possible shared definition of the challenge emerged from the discussion:

How can council maintain the services needed for 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?

Demographic Profile

Participants in Community Working Group meetings to date have been asked to complete a demographic survey designed to obtain information about the group in relation to a number of important characteristics identified by the Project Steering Group. The survey did not identify them individually. This information will assist us to understand how representative the group is, and make arrangements to fill gaps, if any exist. The results are provided in the attached demographic Profile.

The results indicated the following issues:

- East Ward is under represented;
- The 40-49 years age group is under represented;
- There could be more renters in the group (this was identified by the CWG in discussions during Meeting 2);

We will seek to fill these gaps from the people in the current CWG list that have not yet attended, but have indicated they would like to participate. If this is not successful we will ask IRIS Research to undertake further recruitment.

Future meetings

Future meetings of the Community Working Group have been scheduled as follows:

Meeting	Date	Content
3	Wednesday 11 September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate ideas to respond to the challenge
4	Wednesday 9 October 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what is important to the community in terms of outcomes (balance of economic, social and environmental considerations) • Explore what services and infrastructure are most needed to achieve the community's vision for the City of Canterbury • Develop criteria for assessing the options
5	Wednesday 13 November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific options that might provide a solution to the issue. • Evaluate these options (assess them against the criteria developed during Meeting 4)
6	Tuesday 26 November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on the preferred option • Develop the detail of the preferred option
7	Wednesday 11 December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the recommendations of the DWG to Council. • Celebrate completion of DWG's work

Engagement of the Broader Community

Fact Sheet

We prepared a Fact Sheet on the Rates and Services Review and sent this out with rate notices in July 2013. A copy of the Fact Sheet is attached. Already a small number of comments have been received in response to this.

Council Website

We have also published information about the review process on council's website, and invited feedback.

Have Your Say Website

Whilst we can use our current website to provide information, and collect feedback, the capability of our existing website is limited. As a result after investigation and consideration we have purchased Bang the Table's Engagement HQ product as the online platform for allowing the community to participate in the 2013 Rates and Services Review. Other councils that have used or are using Engagement HQ for special rate variation engagements include Gosford, Fairfield City, and Lake Macquarie. Engagement HQ is used by over 70 local governments in Australia, as well as others in New Zealand and Canada.

The tool provides the ability to post information, receive feedback, conduct online surveys, and run blogs, forums and conversations for an unlimited number of projects. The site has been branded **haveyoursaycanterbury.com.au**, and has just been launched. You are encouraged to visit the website, contribute, and also give us any comments you may have.

We will be undertaking a widespread campaign using our enewsletter, council column, posters and flyers distributed across the city to promote this website and invite people to participate in the review.

Other Actions Planned

We will continue with broader community engagement activities, including:

Online (news, articles, headlines):

- Social media –facebook, twitter feed
- Blogging website
- Email networks – eg. sporting clubs, volunteer associations, business networks
- Publish on council's website
- Council app

Face to Face (handouts, tablets for website):

- Visits and presentations to existing community groups eg. parents and friends, chambers of commerce, and others that are conducted in council community centres
- Meeting small groups to spread the word – in person is more effective (eg. community groups, P&C groups,)
- Community forums around Canterbury

Walk by (posters, flyers, handouts):

- Displays and notices on library noticeboards and in shopping centres
- Community newsletters - local community centres, school newsletters, sporting club news, shopping centre posters
- Information in post-offices and banks, train stations, and local businesses
- Information stalls at community events – hand out flyers “Join the conversation” and collect email addresses
- Banner opposite 9th Avenue in Campsie – people look at it

Print media (news, articles, releases):

- Publicise in local newspapers (including ethnic newspapers), letters to the editor
- Advertisements
- Ethnic press
- Newsletter with rate notices to residents (quarterly)

Other:

- Via council’s advisory committees
- Ethnic media eg. radio, translators
- Publicise in different languages to get attention

Project Steering Group

Future Project Steering Group Meetings have been scheduled as follows:

Meeting	Date	Objectives
2	18 September	Review progress after DWG Meeting 3
3	16 October	Review progress after DWG Meeting 5
4	11 December	Review progress after DWG Meeting 6