

Community Waikato submission on Hamilton City Council draft 10 year plan

April 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hamilton City Council 10 year plan.

Community Waikato is about supporting strong communities. Hamilton City Council is also about developing and working with strong communities in Hamilton City. Community Waikato does that by working one to one with community organisations to support their capacity to provide the best possible services. We work with them on governance, management, financial structures, funding, applications, accountability, legal structures, constitutions, compliance. We offer training to back this up and we provide scholarships to enable people to take up the opportunity to participate in training and to work towards higher qualifications. This in turn brings knowledge and skills to the organisation and results in better services.

We facilitate and support networks because we believe networks provide the opportunity for sharing information, ideas and experience, form relationships, seek advice and support from peers.

We support collaborative projects many of which come from networks identifying a common issue and working together on a solution. These range from local to regional to national but all are designed to benefit people in Hamilton and throughout the Waikato.

We provide information relevant to the sector and to help people in their work and their thinking and we gather information to advocate on behalf of the sector. This includes surveys – State of the Sector 2010 and 2011 that we use to inform the community, report to funders and advocate to government.

We are Tindall Foundation fund managers which gives us a further insight into the work and the needs of organisations that adds to our overall knowledge and overview of the sector.

Community Waikato is a member of the Hamilton City Council Social Wellbeing Strategy leadership forum.

Our submission covers:

1. Acknowledgement of the HCC facilities and services that enhance community wellbeing
2. The need for HCC to support community development and leadership and maintain adequate community development staff
3. How the community sector provides value
4. Pensioner housing
5. Community Wellbeing Grants
6. Rents moving to market rates for community organisations
7. HCC working with community sector at a strategic level
8. Two suggestions

1. HCC facilities and services

Social wellbeing means people can live satisfying and productive lives because there are healthy affordable homes, they have access to satisfying jobs and services that include good education, public transport, social and medical services, recreation and leisure, culture and arts and they have the ability to participate, feel included and feel they belong. With their basic needs met and with places to gather and participate, people will be actively engaged in making this city a better place for them, their families and communities to live.

We want to acknowledge the HCC for the funds and support for sport, recreation and leisure, arts, culture and heritage, parks, open spaces and the environment. They enhance our wellbeing. In particular Hamilton Gardens, Hamilton City Libraries, the Community Houses and the Community Development team are a huge asset and are part of what makes Hamilton a thriving city in which to live.

These are all integral to the wellbeing of people living in the city.

2. Support community development.

The city has some excellent places, spaces and services but its greatest asset is its people.

At a number of events and at the recent community consultation conducted by HCC people have identified the real need for neighbourliness, more social cohesion.

We are keen to work with HCC on building a more cohesive society in this city and helping people to feel they belong and are important to the city. Part of this is working with Community Development staff on building capacity of people to grow leaders in the city – people who will take a lead in neighbourhood activities, interest groups and social services.

HCC Community Development staff are an integral part of supporting, encouraging, upskilling and advising people in their community projects, events and services that bring people together and grow the viability of Hamilton as a place people want to live. We suggest HCC thinks carefully about any cuts made in this area.

3. How the community sector provides value

The community sector covers:

- services to children including daycare, after school care, Plunket, holiday programmes, support for autism, medical and other conditions and care for the troubled children who have the misfortune of inadequate or abusive parenting, mental health or other issues
- services for older people including Age Concern, Grey Power, SeniorNet
- services for youth including training, mentoring, transition to work, counselling
- services for everyone including health support e.g. diabetes, heart, kidney, cancer, alzheimers and many others; services providing information and advice, support for single parents, support for the sexually abused and other violence, support with mental health issues, people coming out of prison, people with legal issues, cultural learning, support for refugees and migrants.

The list is huge but the people who volunteer and work in the social services not only provide the services to those who need them but they also free up families to go about their lives – go to school, go to work, have some shopping and leisure time. Without those services Hamilton would stop.

The networks of social service workers identify gaps in services and also solutions. They are the glue that keeps this city going. We urge HCC to continue to support these services

9. Pensioner housing

We understand that selling some pensioner housing that is inadequate to the need is already decided. We urge that HCC reinvests these sales in housing for older people.

We are all aware that our population of older people is increasing. We must prepare for that and believe that HCC must play an integral part in providing adequate housing to keep those people in our city.

10. Community Wellbeing Grants

In the interests of providing the city with adequate social and health services community wellbeing grants need to be retained and in fact increased. HCC is among the lowest in the provision of financial support through grants to its community sector.

HCC collects information through the grantmaking process that is able to be used in planning. This information allows you see the changing needs and available services – this is a valuable tool for the city. Use of a fund manager would still provide the information without the level of cost at present. Savings could be put back in to the grants fund.

11. Rents moving to market rates for community organisations

Community based social service and health organisations rely on ever decreasing grants and contracts to run the services that keep this city viable. Rents are a huge cost already and increasing rents will see organisations close down or move in to entirely unsuitable premises or in places that are inaccessible to their client groups. There is huge stress because of the difficulty of getting funding. Instead of increasing rents perhaps Council could follow the example of other Councils and increase their accommodation at community rates for community organisations.

12. HCC working with community sector at a strategic level

HCC has a valuable resource in the community sector – listen to them because there is wisdom for the good of the city e.g. homelessness is not the issue, the issue is affordable and appropriate social housing.

The city has leaders in the community sector who have a wealth of knowledge and experience about community and how it operates well. Use them because they are your leaders. To use them you need to support their ability to participate at a strategic level. You support the

business sector in many different ways; we urge you to acknowledge the community sector and the value it adds to this city.

13. Two suggestions

- a. Funds are a major issue for HCC. One suggestion to bring in some funds is to sell the naming rights of the Waikato Stadium and Claudelands Events Centre. These could bring in at least \$2m.
- b. Use a fund manager to manage the Community Wellbeing Grants to free up staff for other aspects of community wellbeing and free up some funds to put back into the grants fund. There are several organisations in the community experienced in the management and distribution of funds – we suggest you consider asking them if they would be willing to take on the grants work.

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