

Submission to : Auckland Council

From : Community Waitakere Charitable Trust

Date : 30th November 2012-12-10

Re: Discussion Document: “Thriving Communities – Auckland Council’s role in supporting communities to flourish “

Introduction:

Community Waitakere is a Charitable Trust, dedicated to achieving our vision of a sustainable Waitakere with strong, connected communities.

We have a thirty year history in Waitakere, working collaboratively with communities and local/central government to achieve positive social outcomes for our citizens, neighbourhoods and local community organisations.

We are a lead advocate for the preservation of strong and meaningful local democracy and we believe that working together achieves greater outcomes than working alone.

We are recognised locally, regionally and nationally as a key linkage between communities and central and local government at all levels. We have a long and well-established partnering relationship with Council and the three Western Local Board areas.

Thriving Communities – The discussion document:

The discussion document “Thriving Communities” is a great first step in developing an internal community development strategy to cement Council’s role in the transformation of Auckland into the world’s most liveable city, through the implementation of the Auckland Plan.

We do note that the previous terminology - “**the community development strategy**” has have been replaced with “**the community development strategic action plan**”. We believe strongly that first there must be a strategy. The action plan “falls out” of the strategy. The strategy in fact may be no more than the set of principles.

Community Waitakere congratulates Auckland Council on the approach being taken to develop their community development strategic action plan. The Thriving Communities document and associated local presentations reflect the genuine commitment of Council to get this right and to truly engage with its communities. We agree that amazing things can happen when communities have the power, resources and capability to determine their own development, and have many

firsthand experiences of this happening. It is great to see it clearly stated in the document that Auckland Council recognises the important part it has to play.

Community Waitakere supports Section 79 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 which requires the council to set a strategic direction for Auckland and its communities that integrates social, economic, environmental and cultural objectives

Community Waitakere is deeply committed to the principles of community development and is a willing and ready partner to support and assist Auckland Council to embed this strategy under the current shared governance model.

Community Waitakere's response:

7. Parameters:

We agree that there is no debate about whether or not the council should play a role in the support of community development and the promotion of social outcomes and are encouraged to see this stated boldly at the outset.

19. Principles:

Community Waitakere supports the need for a set of high level community development principles to drive the community development action strategy and influence the council's behaviour and decision making. We suggest that the number of principles is kept to a minimum (4-6) and terminology kept simple and memorable, so that the principles are adaptable across all sectors of the organisation. Influencing those unfamiliar with community development "speak" is one of the greatest challenges and the principles will be critical in terms of transformation of thinking. The essence of the principles captured in the Thriving Communities Document (20. Box 1) provides an excellent base from which to develop a final set. There should be no prioritisation of principles; they should be of equal importance.

21. Council's current roles:

Community Waitakere congratulates Auckland Council for its commitment to retain diversity across the local communities of the new Auckland. The development of a community development action strategy will be a robust safeguard for continuation of this way of working, and will ensure the rich and interesting tapestry for our city is sustained, as envisioned in the Auckland Plan.

24. Funding:

It is essential that Council allocates funding for community groups and their activities and events, however resources must be allocated to the cost of the internal implementation and ongoing support of this community development action strategy. It would be wise for Council to work in partnership with community development organisations to undertake and deliver an implementation plan. There is a unique opportunity here for Council to achieve a wholesale mind shift throughout all its sections, if the skills and experience of the many community development

leaders across Auckland are invited into the planning at the outset. The Mayor's Community Development Think Tank could be re-convened to undertake this task.

26. Key council documents:

The strategic action plan needs to stand right alongside the key council documents listed in the discussion document if it is to succeed. This action plan will pave the way for how the Council itself "thinks". This way of thinking and behaving will need to be visible in everything that council is responsible for, from the way the policy thinkers make their decisions, right through to how the rubbish collectors behave in their neighbourhoods.

28. Community feedback to council:

It is encouraging to hear that some of the themes identified are already being progressed through local board plans, although this would be somewhat expected, as the boards have a closer local focus. The bigger challenge however is the transformation of the thinking of the higher echelons of the council structure and the elected members, so that the strategy can be successfully and fully implemented across the whole of Council. Again we would suggest that working in partnership with Community Development champions, both inside and outside of Council, would assist in embedding this strategy soundly within Auckland Council at all levels.

29. Examples of successful and promising practice:

The document sites useful and inspirational approaches and practices. There are many "experts" both within and without Council who could contribute much wisdom and experience in the implementation planning and delivery of the action plan. It is essential that these resources are accessed if Council is serious about undertaking this transformational shift in its approach.

42. Match funding:

Many of us have been inspired by the stories of Jim Diers on his recent visits. Local place based initiatives are beginning to exhibit readiness to work with council in this way. So simple, and so much can be achieved through the harnessing of strengths and assets of communities without the burden of fundraising. Recognising strengths and assets as equally important to the dollar requires a shift in thinking, but once unleashed so much can be achieved.

43. Procurement:

The Council's Procurement Policy could play a vital role in the community development action strategy. Hopefully these will be linked together as part of the shift in thinking. Cases cited in Thriving Communities give excellent examples of how social local wellbeing can benefit and be uplifted, if the council's strategies policies are based on community development principled thinking.

Community Waitakere applauds Council's approach in the development of a community development strategic action plan. This is one of the most exciting opportunities for Council to achieve its vision and the directives of the Auckland Plan which supports ground-up community development through to capacity and capability building. We are committed to assisting and supporting Council and the Local Boards in the process of developing and implementation of this plan.

Thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Pat Watson
Chief Executive
Community Waitakere

November 2012