

# Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007–2017

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Evaluation Report - May 2021



In 2007, the Council produced its Strengthening Communities Strategy (the Strategy) as

**“a framework to guide the Council’s work with community organisations which in turn work in a range of ways to help develop strong communities”**

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## Summary of the evaluation

In 2007, the Council produced its Strengthening Communities Strategy (the Strategy) as “a framework to guide the Council’s work with community organisations which in turn work in a range of ways to help develop strong communities”<sup>1</sup>.

In 2021 the Council is developing a new ‘refreshed’ framework strategy for the next ten years and this assessment of the 2007 Strategy is part of identifying where we are now so that we can better prepare for the future. This evaluation will primarily focus on the Strategy’s implementation and whether it was fit for purpose.

In preparing this evaluation we have gathered feedback from staff, elected members and representatives of community organisations, analysed the strategy document itself together with written material such as staff reports, project plans and memoranda, relating to implementation of the Strategy. The evaluation is predicated on Council’s expectation that the Strategy achieve the following results for Council’s work in the area of strengthening communities:

- Become more goal-focused and outcome oriented;
- Place greater emphasis on promoting collaboration and working in partnerships to address issues of importance to communities; and
- Put more effort into research, monitoring, evaluating and reporting back to the Council, Community Boards and the wider community<sup>2</sup>.

In 2015, as part of a broader Strategy update, the views of staff involved in community support and policy development were canvassed. The collective view of staff was that generally the Strategy (including the process to develop the Strategy) had promoted a positive culture change within the Council organisation; enabling staff to work across units and wards and helping empower community support work in leadership development, networking, funding/resourcing and capability building. For staff working in the community support area, the Strategy provided a mandate for their work and was relevant to our many diverse communities across geographic wards and those formed by common interests.

In 2020 an advisory group was set up to review the Strategy as part of providing input into the development of a replacement strategy. This group undertook a similar assessment to the 2015 process. Both groups determined that the Strategy provided a good model for working with the community; they valued the strong principles and definitions of community development and the commitment to resourcing and funding the community and voluntary sector. Both groups also identified the lack of an implementation plan as a key weakness of the Strategy.

With regard to the positive results of the Strategy, staff identified a range of direct and indirect achievements<sup>3</sup>. They included new and innovative ways of responding to disruption, collaborative approaches to community grant funding, the development of Community Board plans and Community Profiles and the creation of local network forums across the city. Staff also consider the development of the Disability Charter and Multicultural Strategy can be attributed to implementation of the Strategy and that it has also influenced the Council plans and strategies for arts, sports and recreation, community facilities and heritage. Finally, implementation of the Strategy has made a significant direct material difference to the voluntary and community sectors; since 2008, more than \$84 million dollars have been distributed to community organisations in 8,838 community grants contributing to over 15 million hours of volunteer work in the community.

In assessing the Strategy as a document, its most obvious attributes are length (88 pages), the unnecessary repetition in the document, and the inclusion of various elements of policy, planning material and standard operating procedures. Overall, the Strategy lacked a clear focus because of the level of detail together with the inclusion of material which are not strategic in purpose (such as the guidelines for the operation of the community funding schemes). One of the weakest areas of the Strategy is the section on monitoring and evaluation; there is no commitment to an action plan to form the basis for effective monitoring, and the strategy outcome measures do not clearly relate to the eight strategy goals or the broad action areas under each goal.

## Conclusion

The Strategy and its implementation has had positive effects in how the Council works with the community. Staff assessed it as having directly and indirectly contributed to a wide range of achievements including contributing to the overall resilience of Christchurch’s communities in the face of the multiple shocks and challenges faced over the past 13 years.

**The Strategy, and its principles in particular, has provided a successful model for the way we work with communities fulfilling the Council’s expectation that our work in strengthening communities “will place greater emphasis on promoting collaboration and working in partnerships to address issues of importance to communities”<sup>4</sup>.**

There have been some areas where Council’s expectations have not been met. Specifically, these relate to the Strategy needing to be “goal-focused and outcome oriented” and about “putting more effort into... monitoring, evaluating and reporting back to the Council, Community Boards and the wider community.”<sup>5</sup> The Strategy includes eight high-level aspirational goals but fails to provide clear directions as to the outcomes sought and how the goals are going to be translated into action. The Strategy is essentially a policy framework with no implementation plan or coherent monitoring framework. As such, the strategy has not achieved Council’s expectations for strengthening community work to be goal focused.

Looking ahead to the development of a new ‘refreshed’ strategy, we conclude that it should be succinct, easy to read, focus only on matters of strategic importance, and have defined priorities for action. Successful implementation of the new strategy will require a comprehensive monitoring and review framework and have an accompanying implementation plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007, Executive Summary, page 3

<sup>2</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007, Executive Summary, page 4.

<sup>3</sup> Staff presentation to elected members “Strengthening Communities Strategy Refresh” 30-11-2020.

<sup>4</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy, How will we achieve our vision and goals, page 56

<sup>5</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy, Executive Summary, page 4.

## Introduction to the evaluation

This qualitative evaluation of the Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007 has been undertaken to inform the new refreshed strategy for the next decade that is currently in development.

A companion document to this Evaluation is the Community Engagement Summary report which will also contribute to the Strategy refresh.

This evaluation draws on a range of sources including:

- Internal reports and memoranda on the monitoring and implementation of key strategies prepared by staff in the Strategic Policy team in Council
- Notes from a 2015 preliminary ‘canvas’ of the Strategy in the form of a collective SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and the threats to the success) of the strategy. Participants in this assessment were staff from the Community Governance and Support and Strategic Policy units. In addition to the SWOT analysis, individual views of the participants in the review canvas were recorded.

- Feedback provided by an advisory group established in 2020 made up of practitioners in community development, both from the Council and stakeholder organisations. This group explored Strategy achievements over the past 13 years and provided advice on a new refreshed strategy. This feedback was provided during a series of workshops and meetings over a period of four months with the objective to gauge how successful the Strategy has been in achieving its intended outcome, what gaps need to be addressed and what emerging issues should be addressed in the review and refresh of the Strategy.
- Discussions with Council staff from across the organisation.

## Outline of the Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007

This section outlines briefly the background, content, implementation and monitoring of the Strengthening Community Strategy 2007.

Council’s 2007 Strategy was an innovative approach in response to the new responsibilities for local authorities set out in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) which aimed to promote the social and cultural wellbeing of the community. Its development over 2005-2007 was led by three teams within the Council (Community Development, Community Grants and Community Facilities) and an external reference group. Following a process of wider engagement and consultation it was approved to guide the Council’s work in ‘strengthening communities’ for the ten years to 2017.

The Strategy sits under the Council’s high-level strategic framework, complementary to other second level documents contributing to the Stronger Communities outcomes (such as the “Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy”<sup>6</sup>). The Strategy was intended to give effect to high level council policies for children, older persons, consultation, equity and access and youth. Future complementary strategies were identified as those for “Democratic Participation”, “Lifelong Learning” and “Housing”<sup>7</sup>.

The Strategy begins with a lengthy preliminary section (pages 1-29), providing the demographic and organisational context, and identifying the related key challenges. The particular role of the Council in strengthening communities is outlined alongside a description of what was known as the Group Grant Funding Schemes and Council’s provision of community facilities community halls, meeting rooms and offices.<sup>8</sup>

The main body of the Strategy (pages 33-76) provides:

- A vision for Council’s role in strengthening communities
- Principles to guide Council’s approach to its role
- Eight high level goals for the Strategy with broad action areas under each goal. These broad action areas were intended to be indicative only and were subject to change over the life of the Strategy.<sup>9</sup>
  - Goals 1-3 reflected Council’s response to the expectations set out in the LGA 2002; an emphasis on the importance of a well- researched overview of

community issues (goal 1), promoting collaboration (goal 2) and increasing community engagement (goal 3).

- Goals 4 to 8 set out the areas in which the Council contributed directly through funding and other forms of support; building a sense of local community (goal 4), to ensure access to community facilities (goal 5), to increase participation in community recreation and sport (goal 6), to enhance the safety of communities (goal 7) and to improve life skills so that people can participate fully in society (goal 8).

- The strategy framework details some of the risks, and has a brief monitoring and evaluation section which sets out five objectives with high level indicators (pages 71-73)
- The Strategy also includes a number of sections that do not directly apply to the strategic framework. A detailed section covers the Strengthening Communities Grant programme (pages 59-63) and outlines the grant funding that was available when the Strategy was first released. Another section on the Community Facilities Network Plan (pages 65-68) explored the range and quality of community facilities available. Work commenced shortly after the Strategy was implemented however was out on hold as the earthquake recovery and response took precedence. A Community Network Facilities plan has since been completed and was adopted by Council on 17 December 2020

### Assessing the Goals

As part of assessing the success of the Strategy, the next section of this report will provide an analysis of the individual goals. This review will consider the original intent of the goal, how this was articulated, and highlights a range of actions undertaken in support of the goal. It will also consider where activities fell outside the technical boundaries of the goal, but still contributed to its success. The assessment will also note where the goal did not, or could not, cover or foresee events that occurred during the 13 years the Strategy has been active.

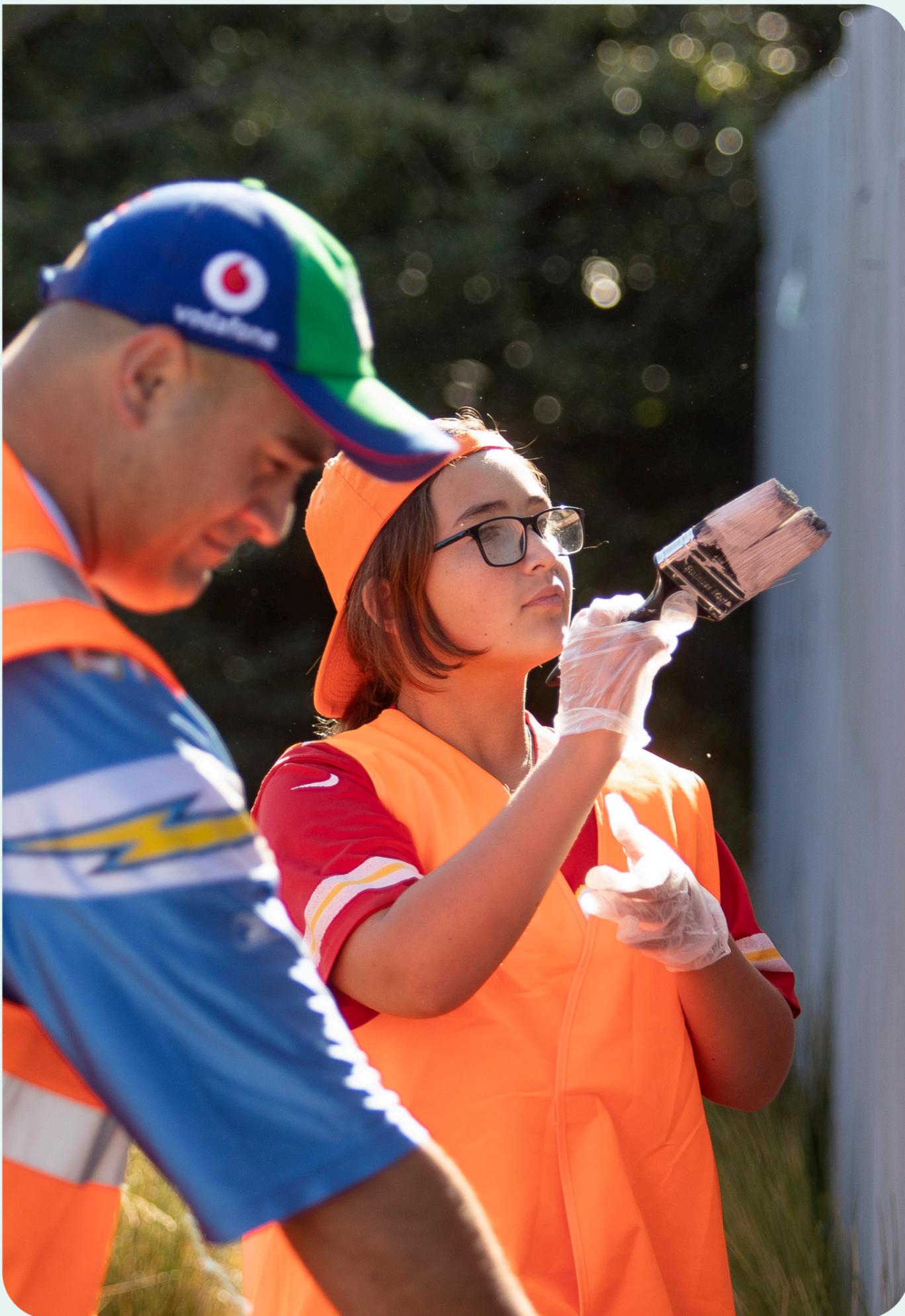
<sup>6</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy, page 12

<sup>7</sup> The Council has not developed strategies for ‘lifelong learning’ or ‘democratic participation’.

<sup>8</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy, page 28

<sup>9</sup> Strengthening Communities Strategy, page 35





## Goal 1: Understand and document communities' trends, issues and imperatives

Council planned to:

- Collate funding and evaluation and other research information
- Analyse the research information
- Disseminate research information throughout the Council and the wider community
- Track and act on research recommendations inside and outside Council

### Actions

This goal was developed to improve the use of information and evidence as a basis for better understanding community needs, directing activities and the use of resources. Following the release of the Strategy, in 2008 Council research was undertaken to support the development of implementation planning. While this would almost certainly inform community development practitioners, it is difficult to identify what impact this research has had on strategy implementation.

At a local level, there have been numerous Community needs assessments commissioned or undertaken by Council, academics, and community groups across a wide range of topics and areas to inform decisions on activities and community aspirations. This community based research looked at areas such as the sports and recreation needs of local communities, the impact of social isolation on older adults<sup>10</sup>, the impact of youth drinking in Fendalton, and the impact on support services stemming from the sudden increase of a large migrant workforce during the Christchurch rebuild to name a few.

After the Canterbury Earthquakes in 2010, Council undertook a comprehensive exercise where Community Profiles were developed across 52 city mesh block areas. Originally intended to inform Council and government on areas most impacted, these Profiles extended their reach across the city identifying social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts on communities at both local and metropolitan level. These Profiles identified local challenges and opportunities and provided a deeper understanding of the communities' assets and needs. The Profiles were discontinued due to the significant resource requirements, but have been recently reactivated with the first of the new ten year Profile series due for completion in early 2021. The Profiles have a wide range of applications for both Council and the community from identifying funding priorities to understanding the requirements for community support in specific suburbs and communities of interest or ethnicity. This information

will assist Council decision making and enable resources and support to go where the need is greatest.

### Assessment

- While there was some intent to develop a systematic and regular data collection and assessment process, the decision to discontinue the Community Profiles left a significant gap in formal and informal data collection and analysis
- Information and data to support Council decisions aligned with the Strategy has subsequently been ad hoc, or only sought for specific decisions or actions. While useful, this has left some voids in creating a baseline understanding of community trends
- Regular collection from the Council Monitoring and Research unit and close collaboration with other agencies and organisations has, to some extent, mitigated this gap however its regular application in planning remains inconsistent
- Close collaboration with the community and organisations is a priority to ensure Council and Community Board decision making is appropriately informed and that learnings drive continuous improvement.

### Future considerations

1. Continue to engage with diverse communities at a local and city level
2. Understand the needs of new and evolving communities in both rural and urban areas
3. Community Boards understand the needs of the community, and current Community Board Plans reflect these
4. Produce annual Community Profiles across geographical and Metropolitan areas
5. Use research and datasets more intentionally to prioritise resources

<sup>10</sup> Social Isolation and Older People in Canterbury, Age Concern Canterbury, 2011

## Goal 2: Promoting collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, Māori, Iwi and community and voluntary organisations, to identify and address community issues

Council planned to:

- Work with key stakeholders from the government, Māori and Iwi and community and voluntary sectors to identify specific collaborative areas of focus for a defined period.
- Advocate to central government on behalf of its communities
- Establish key relationship funding agreements with community and voluntary sector organisations that make a major contribution to achieving the vision and goals of this Strategy, either at the city-wide or local level

### Actions

The Strategy provided a focus on areas where significant measurable progress could be made through collaborative action on key issues. This approach would not direct Council to be a service provider nor necessarily the lead, but rather be an active participant or facilitator, and connect other partners when required.

The Strategy anticipated that Council would have up to three areas of focus at any time, lasting over a period of three years. This would provide a reasonable length of time to gain traction in areas where a partnership approach was required. These focus areas needed to demonstrate close alignment to the Strategy vision and principles, have clear evidence, and be an issue of city wide significance with ongoing benefit to the residents of Christchurch. Consideration of these focus areas was underway by 2010 but was interrupted by the Canterbury earthquakes, forcing a reprioritisation of resources.

Broadly, Council staff have seen significant success in working collaboratively with partners. Staff have robust relationships across government departments (at a national and local level) and work together on issues of common interest. Community partnerships have been extended, such as the Interagency Network for Refugees and Migrants, the Funding Leaders Advisory Group, and the Eastern/Central Youth Workers Network. Christchurch has a long history of collegial and constructive relationships across a broad range of sectors, working together and alongside the community wherever possible. Council's investment in nurturing these relationships has contributed to a high trust network of local expertise across local communities and sectors.

Council regularly provides submissions to central Government, advocating for the people of Christchurch on issues often relating to community wellbeing and development. Some examples include how to reinvigorate local democracy, development of New Zealand's first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy, Control of Graffiti Bill 2016-2026, Social Housing reform, and the CERA Recovery Strategy. Similarly, Community Boards have also provided their own submissions or feedback to advocate for their local communities.

Over the last 13 years Council has had a flexible approach to grant funding in order to support the community in the wake of numerous significant events. The funding process has evolved to enable ease of access and engender a high trust partnership approach. For example, for several years Council has allowed key flagship organisations the option to apply for three year grants, providing surety for planning purposes. In 2020 Council extended this option to smaller community organisations to increase flexibility and bureaucracy where appropriate. Over the last 12 years Council has administered \$84 million through the Strengthening Communities Fund, and \$10.2 million through the Discretionary Response Fund. Community loans to 39 groups totalled \$5.2 million. In all, this contributed to around 12.8 million volunteer hours.

### Assessment

- While the original intent of the Strategy was to have three year periods with specific focus points, this was made somewhat redundant by the immediate needs of the community following the 2010 earthquake and subsequent aftershocks. As such, a rapid and flexible approach was implemented without these focus areas
- Close collaboration with partners has resulted in resources being focussed on vulnerable communities. The current collaborative practices reflect this historical arrangement, resulting in stronger communities that have a greater ability to adapt and engage with development partners
- While Council and other partners such as The Rata Foundation have provided significant funding to the community, there is still need as the city grows, ages, and evolves
- Council's regular submissions to central government and other agencies on behalf of residents have reflected the community's needs, drawing from regular consultation with partner and community organisations. Influencing central Government decision making on behalf of residents remains a key function for Council

### Future considerations

1. Continue to invest in partnerships and networking that encourages collaboration across diverse communities and stakeholders
2. Facilitate and attend forums and networks to identify needs and opportunities for collaboration and partnership
3. Work in partnership with communities to plan and prepare for emergencies and change
4. Reactivate annual funding satisfaction surveying to support continuous improvement
5. Work with central Government funders to better target Council funding to reduce duplication or occasions where it is used as a 'top up' to activities that are essentially Government responsibilities
6. Future strategic planning must remain flexible to opportunities and threats stemming from major events
7. Focus on improving and diversifying information channels (both formal and informal) to meet community needs



## Goal 3: Enhancing engagement and participation in local decision-making

Council planned to:

- Employ a range of innovative techniques to increase levels of public participation in Council decision-making
- Build shared trust and understanding with and within communities
- Evaluate existing Council consultation policy and procedures
- Ensure Council policies on consultation with Māori are effective
- Ensure that Council submissions, seminars and meeting are open, accessible and community oriented
- Ensure accountability around community engagement processes
- Raise awareness of the importance of community engagement and participation in decision-making

### Actions

Since 2007 the Council has made significant advances in the range of communication tools it uses and in the language it uses to communicate with its communities. Council operate a range of tools such as traditional news sources, and targeted mail and email messages and have an active social media presence across multiple platforms. Regular updates provide frequent information on Council activities, events and upcoming decisions and methods of consultation.

Council regularly update the Significance and Engagement Policy which aims to ensure decision-makers are well informed, taking into account the community's views. The policy is based on the principle that the community have clarity on how to engage, and are part of an accessible two-way dialogue. The policy takes into account the impact of decisions, urgency, the need for confidentiality, and the required level of engagement and consultation based on those factors.

Council's online consultation tool, Have Your Say, has become widely used to provide all required information to inform public consultation. These consultations have been wide and varied, and can include areas such as infrastructure, roading changes and area management plans.

In a number of cases the community has formed their own interest groups to influence other organisations such as Council and central Government. For example, Council regularly engages with the Youth Council. Since 2014 the Christchurch Youth Council has been an independent organisation representing youth interests in the city. By engaging with groups like this, Council is able to advocate the views of diverse communities in the city.

While there has been improvement in Council's technical ability to engage with the community to help residents provide input to Council decision-making, this has not been borne out in the public's perception. The level of public satisfaction with the decreasing in 2020 to its lowest since 2010. The 2015-17 period reflected the highest proportion of residents feeling they had some influence and understanding of decision-making processes. It is important to note that civic engagement has been declining as a worldwide trend, making it important for Council to continually look for innovative ways to engage the community in Council decision-making.

### Assessment

- The Christchurch public were highly aware of Council and central Government decision-making in the immediate years following the Canterbury earthquake
- Council has employed and regularly updated a range of innovative techniques and tools to promote public participation. There remains a natural limit to the ability to engage outside of residents immediate area of interest, but the use of social media and similar platforms will generate opportunities with key items of interest
- Consultation policy and practices have been evolving, but public satisfaction with their ability to participate in decision-making has remained low, reaching 26% in 2020, reflecting the lowest number since at least 2012. While their options for participation have grown, there appears to be a perception that this consultation is either too late in the process or will not have impact on the decision process
- Council's direct engagement with community organisations and interest groups has largely been successful, reflecting the positive nature of targeted engagement that cannot easily be replicated on a city-wide scale
- Youth engagement activities and collaboration with community organisations has seen significant improvement in youth civic awareness and participation

### Future considerations

1. Strengthen resident's ability to influence local decisions through effective community engagement on local policies, strategies, and service delivery
2. Support community led design and delivery and explore new models of partnership and co-governance
3. Encourage the community to engage with Community Boards and Council
4. Improve techniques to better enable engagement by networks and residents groups
5. Support community led responses to address social exclusion
6. Invest in partnerships and networking that encourage collaboration across diverse communities and stakeholders
7. Facilitate local or city wide engagement with communities of interest or identity to ensure views are considered in Council decision-making
8. Local government engagement processes are better understood with clear pathways for involvement
9. Bolster civic education programmes

## Goal 4: Helping build and sustain a sense of local community

Council planned to:

- Support capacity building of local community organisations
- Respond flexibly to local trends and issues
- Promote and provide opportunities for communities to participate in Council decision-making processes at both city-wide and local levels
- Fund local community organisations and projects that align to Council’s strategic directions and relevant Council strategies
- Provide support and advice to local community groups to help them to become more effective with a focus on encouraging groups to work together collaboratively
- Support Community neighbourhood activities that build a sense of connectedness

### Actions

This goal is relatively broad, and incorporates a number of projects across multiple Council portfolios. For example, as noted in goal one, Council developed and released Community Profiles that provide information and trends to inform decisions within Council and the community. Community funding contributes to other goals, but can also be the tool to sustain local communities.

Similarly, Council’s facilities, public places and publically accessible activities all help build a sense of place and local identity. These can include local libraries and service centres, parks, volunteering activities, beautification and place making activities, recreation and sporting events, public art displays, and heritage buildings or activities. Council also took steps to reward members of the community with civic awards where the service of volunteers has gone above and beyond the call of duty for Christchurch and its people.

Council has provided a wide array of opportunities for communities to participate in a range of activities and collaborate in their communities. Council has provided a significant investment through its community development staff across the city, with this goal being their priority objective. The staff have been involved in a variety of capacity building activities, and formed robust partnerships in the communities and local networks.

Council supported the development of and provided funding for the Leadership in Communities (LINC) programme in 2015, which helps build “thriving leaders in local communities”. This provides the community

the opportunity to identify, support and enhance local leadership, and was created as a result of the post-earthquake environment where many community leaders were feeling burn-out. The programme is still ongoing, and has supported over 800 new and emerging leaders across the city.

### Assessment

- This goal is the core of the Strategy, and its success can be found across all the other goals
- Every action the Council does that brings the community together, whether it is an activity or shared facility, contributes to the goal of building and sustaining a local community
- The current level of activity and community engagement developed in the recovery effort following the Canterbury earthquakes, but has evolved in nature

### Future considerations

1. Promote volunteering opportunities across Council and the wider community and support those who provide these opportunities
2. Determine the potential change and impact on local communities that would happen should facilities and civic services increase or decrease
3. Develop additional community training courses or opportunities for volunteerism, organisational and leadership development

## Goal 5: Ensuring that communities have access to community facilities that meet their needs

Council planned to:

- Ensure Council community facilities are distributed evenly across the city
- Enhance community connectedness by providing opportunities for community involvement in the use and management of Council community facilities
- Ensure the design and location of community facilities maximises accessibility, including disabled access and proximity to public transport
- Ensure fees and charges are set at a level to encourage community usage
- Ensure the design of new facilities enhances sustainability through good urban design and flexibility which accommodates a mix of uses and activities
- Ensure Council facilities are managed effectively and efficiently

### Actions

In 2020 Council finalised a Community Facilities Network Plan to address issues relating to the location, type and condition of community facilities such as halls, meeting rooms and community centres. There had been significant uncertainty about the future of community facilities following the Canterbury earthquakes, as the facility portfolio suffered extensive damage, and Council had prioritised the repair and rebuild of facilities across the city. 12 facilities were built, and another 13 underwent major repair with a total budget of \$55 million.

As part of this process, Council committed to incorporating additional contributions into new and refurbished facilities. Elements such as Crime Prevention and Injury Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED and IPTED) and accessibility have become business as normal. Approaches like this have improved facilities by ensuring they are fit for purpose and follow good design practices.

The process of developing the Community Facilities Network Plan has also allowed Council to better assess the distribution of facilities and determine priority areas for future growth. Similarly, this process has triggered a renewed consideration of fees and charges to ensure they are balanced without being overly inhibitive to community groups.

This plan also provided Council the impetus for accessibility assessments in Council facilities. Discussions with the disability sector through groups such as the Disability Advisory Group (DAG) ensured Council was being proactive in ensuring community facilities met the requirements and needs of the community.

### Assessment

- There remain some community concerns that appropriate facilities may not be distributed evenly throughout the city, and will need to remain part of future facilities planning
- While facility occupancy is fairly consistent, there is scope to consider the current holdings and availability, to ensure greater opportunities for more community groups
- Where community organisations manage Council facilities in a partnership model this has resulted in some savings and increased occupancy in some instances
- Facility assessments that ensure community facilities are safe and accessible have allowed Council to better understand community needs and any shortfalls the facility holdings may have

### Future considerations

1. Fully implement the Facilities Network Plan to ensure that it continues to meet community requirements
2. Support community activation and management of facilities through a Council and community partnership model
3. Look for opportunities to work with the community to look after the public spaces and places where residents and visitors connect. Explore options to encourage users to have fun, create, plan, relax, learn and play together in common spaces
4. Council and community should work in partnership to encourage communities to care for and activate community facilities and public spaces

## Goal 6: Increasing participation in community recreation and sport programmes and events

Council planned to:

- Promote the value of integrating community recreation and sport into everyday life
- Facilitate or deliver accessible and meaningful recreation and sport opportunities for everyone
- Provide advice and resources to internal and external stakeholders
- Facilitate or deliver community recreation and sport leadership training and education
- Conduct and respond to research and evaluation

### Actions

Council runs a significant number of community recreation and sports events and programmes as part of normal community engagement. Larger events such as Culture Galore and Children's Day are regularly attended by large crowds, and have been very successful at achieving this goal. On a smaller scale, events in local parks, neighbourhood fun days, and funding for community activities all increase residents participation in community recreation. By ensuring there is a range of opportunities available, there is a higher probability that residents will engage in Council and community led activities.

Council also supports recreation leadership opportunities such as through the "Get Set Go!" workshops that teach members of the community how to organise programmes and events. Run at a discount for voluntary or not for profit groups, this workshop promotes community activation and recreation.

The "Give Gear Get Great" initiative provides a means for community members to provide free sports equipment to people in the community who may be unable to afford the equipment. With the expense of some sports equipment to certain sports, this provides a positive and easy for the community to help itself promote active recreation and sports participation.

### Assessment

- Council successfully partners with a number of influential organisations in Canterbury to promote sport and recreation
- Sports organisation funding through the community grant schemes have helped sports clubs remain viable, accounting for fluctuations in player numbers
- New opportunities for Council to run or support sports will become apparent as the Metro Sport Facility is further developed

### Future considerations

1. Support community based activities that celebrate identity and increase community involvement in the arts, culture, heritage, sport and recreation and the environment.
2. Further promote and provide additional volunteering opportunities in and out of Council
3. Continue to support local, neighbourhood and sector-based events and activities
4. Enable life enriching encounters between people and across ages, ethnicities and abilities
5. Have a focus on accessibility



## Goal 7: Enhancing the safety of communities and neighbourhoods

Council planned to:

- Reduce the incidence of injury in our community
- Enhance safety on our roads
- Enhance safety from crime through preventative and supportive action
- Support safety and injury prevention through collaboration and coordination
- Take a lead role in implementing the Safer Christchurch Strategy
- Undertake a stock take of, and evaluate, current work that links in and supports the Safer Christchurch Strategy
- Build and maintain relationships with funding agencies

### Actions

Much of the implementation of this goal was transitioned to the Safer Christchurch Strategy, which was most recently updated in 2016. Under this strategy, Christchurch became an internationally accredited Safe City in 2008. Issues related to city safety were coordinated through a Council Safety Team which worked closely with a broader alliance of agencies who worked in the community safety space across the city. The dedicated Safety Team was disestablished in 2015, with some tasks distributed to other units within Council.

Council regularly convenes cross agency partnerships which include a diverse range of stakeholders to address local and metropolitan safety issues. These include partnering and working to address at-risk youth behaviours, drug and alcohol misuse, burglary, city street patrols, family violence, road and cycle safety, graffiti prevention and removal, homelessness, and the problems of the street community and street workers.

As noted in Goal 5, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) advice is provided by a range of staff across the organisation. While early in its introduction this was managed by the dedicated Council Safety Team, the increasing reach and capability of staff has led to this becoming business as usual, enhancing safety and reducing criminal opportunities in new developments.

Council has also identified how to better use local assets and strengths in its earthquake response. During the 2010-11 earthquake aftermath, communities responded to their local or sector based needs, and ended up mobilising and becoming organised without official direction. Council's role was often to support, facilitate and provide resources and at times get out of the way or remove potential constraints.

Council has also been exploring ways to move away from direct safety service provision, to a model where we support communities to have the capacity to respond to their community safety related issues. An example of this approach is the Christchurch Alcohol Action Plan (for minimising alcohol harm) which supports a non-regulatory response by stakeholder partners. Other approaches have been in operation for some time, such as the Christchurch Road Safety Action Plan, which serves as a collaborative planning tool for road safety partner agencies. This collaborative approach highlights Council's role as a support agency amongst the collective organisations who work in this space.

This collaborative approach has also led to Council supporting graffiti removal projects, collaborative at-risk youth projects, and resource provision for Neighbourhood Support. These community activities create a partnership model which enables communities to identify, own and resolve their priority issues with Council support.

### Assessment

- The disestablishment of the Council Safety Team in 2015 significantly reduced Council's direct involvement in safety issues. Partnering with other agencies has been inconsistent, but has reflected the role of Council as often being a support partner and advocate
- This goal was, to an extent, superseded by the Safer Christchurch Strategy
- Resident's sense of safety in their homes has remained consistently high over the last 10 years, with only minor changes over this period. The lowest sense of safety was during the early recovery and rebuild stage following the Canterbury earthquake, which is understandable given the loss of homes, emergence of red zoned areas, unkempt properties and temporary accommodation
- There remains a marked contrast for the perception of safety in the central city between day time (92%) and at night (43%). The lack of people, antisocial behaviours, and shift of many businesses to the suburbs are all contributing factors
- The motivation and activation of the communities during the major events in Canterbury over the last 10 years represents the best principles of the Strategy. Stronger communities supported by Council, responding to crisis with positive effects embody the city envisaged by the Strategy
- Community-led projects that utilise a collaborative or partnership model with Council and other agencies create buy-in from the community and partners, making those most impacted by them be part of the solution

### Future considerations

1. Investigate the establishment of a City Safety Alliance (Metropolitan and Local) and a dashboard reporting system
2. Enhance support for community-led activities that create a sense of community and address local area safety issues
3. Work in partnership with communities to plan and prepare for disruption and change
4. Support and resource community approaches to sustainable environmental practices and activities to address climate change



## Goal 8: Improving basic life skills so that all residents can participate fully in society

Council planned to:

- Identify essential life skills with relevant government agencies, community and voluntary organisations
- Communicate effectively what Council will and will not support
- Provide support and advice to community groups with a proven focus on life skills programmes and early intervention initiatives
- Work collaboratively with other funders and agencies to ensure sustainability of programmes
- Advocate to central government where gaps exist in services that should be provided at a central government level

### Actions

Council had committed to enable residents of all ages to participate in a number of areas such as budgeting, use of communications technology, parenting skills, communication and conflict resolution, and how to run a healthy household. These approaches represented ways in which Council sought to support the vulnerable in our community. To achieve this, Council partnered with a large number of community groups, organisations and government agencies. This resulted in targeted service delivery, funding, and support across the city.

As part of achieving this support, the goal was closely aligned to the Strengthening Communities Grant Funding which has allowed Council to fund multiple projects across the city to support community groups to carry out their work with disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The end result has been seen in improving socio-economic outcomes. The role of the volunteer and community sector in providing these supports is critical.

This goal also identified early childhood education as an opportunity to impart life skills at a young age. While Council no longer runs our own Early Childhood Centres (ELC), we continue to support community based early childhood education located in Council owned facilities.

Council also provide a large number of very significant learning opportunities at the community level through the Council's network of libraries. Activities, education courses, and assistance in carrying out basic digital tasks have supported a large number of people with need in the community.

### Assessment

- The aging population will result in an increase in requests for support from Council services, as many residents have difficulty using online or remote services
- Community organisations are the key conduit to providing the essential life skills courses for the community. Multi-year funding commitment from Council allows these organisations to plan ahead without funding distractions

### Future considerations

1. Support community and voluntary groups to address barriers to well-being including income, age, gender, identity, faith, ethnicity, ability or location
2. Support community responses that address social exclusion, recognising the complexity and need to partner where appropriate
3. Continue to advocate to central government for more support for community led education programmes



## Summary of the input from the Advisory Group

The Strategy has provided leverage for other units of Council to prioritise activities that strengthen communities, but feedback would suggest it is valued more for its principles than its strategic priorities. The Advisory Group noted that the Strategy didn't speak clearly enough to other units of Council that contribute to building strong communities, and failed to direct a whole-of-Council approach to strengthening communities. This resulted in a fragmented Strategy implementation.

The Advisory Group broadly agreed that the Strategy is considered a good model for working with the community. It is well known across community sectors, particularly as its goals provide a direct link to Council's community grant funding programmes and it clearly outlines the Council's commitment to the community and voluntary sector.

Other feedback received from staff in the Community Support and Partnerships unit includes:

- While the Strategy's values and principles have remained the foundation for how we work, it does not set out a clear path for achieving the goals or how we can measure the outcomes of the activities
- The size and layout of the strategy is a barrier for the reader
- The implementation section is confusing and has obscure outcomes monitoring and measurements. As a result, the Strategy did not have regular reports, and Council's community outcomes monitoring was not directly linked to the Strategy action areas.
- The Strategy states only in broad terms how Council intends to achieve its eight goals, and does not set clear priorities in terms of objectives or areas of action
- The Strategy doesn't reflect the community's renewed role in addressing challenges such as climate change and sustainability
- It also fails to consider the greater consideration of greater local decision-making and the increased delegations of community boards

- It doesn't focus on the important role that communities play in emergencies, or how social capital can drive action and build resilience.
- The Strategy doesn't adequately reflect the ability of communities to organise themselves organically without external direction, or the desire of Council to enable and support capacity building in this regard
- The Strategy is outdated. It references community and voluntary organisations that no longer exist and omits the huge array of formal and informal networks across the city
- Since 2007, a number of other related strategies have been developed or are underway (such as the Multicultural, Arts, Sports and Recreation, Heritage, and Climate Change Strategy). A new refreshed strategy should take these into account.
- The Strategy provided a framework for funding priorities and was strongly aligned to Council's Strengthening Communities Grant Funding Programme. A funding review needs to be undertaken to align funding to the refreshed strategy goals and priorities. This could also move funding towards partnership rather than dependency approaches. Overall it seems that the Strategy was trying to capture everything. This resulted in an ambitious strategy with little direct commitment to achieving its goals and actions

## What we've learned from our revaluation

**“The wisdom of the community when combined with the knowledge of the experts always exceeds what one can offer without the other” Harold Fleming**

- People are our greatest asset
- Where and how we connect is important
- Supported communities will actively seek to take back responsibility for their futures
- The Community and Council can successfully plan together for the future
- With support, vulnerable communities will thrive

### We achieved this because we:

- Acknowledged Council's limits and advantages
- Knew our community
- Supported emerging leadership
- Worked together to build capacity and capability
- Learned from others, and continue to learn about ourselves
- Resourced people
- Got out of the way

## What the community told us:

- Support communities to design their own futures
- Create opportunities for lifelong contributions
- Communicate and provide clear pathways to engagement
- Embrace diversity and inclusion
- Ensure accessibility (across the spectrum from services to communications)
- Tighten focus on vulnerable communities
- Partner with others to provide targeted approaches
- Support community and voluntary organisations with resources (funding) and provision of built environments (spaces and places)
- Christchurch is changing; assist us to respond to disruption and change
- Work is needed to support and build community resilience
- Communities want to participate in Council business and influence decision making
- Residents want Council activities to be accountable to Elected Members and community through regular reporting and monitoring

# Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007–2017

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Evaluation Report - May 2021