

Date: Monday, 3 August 2015
Time: 10.00am
Meeting Room: Board Room, Ground Floor
Venue: Auckland Town Hall
301-305 Queen Street
Auckland

Disability Advisory Panel

OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

ITEM	TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
9.1	Disestablishment of Strategic Advisors (Disability)	
A.	3 August 2015 - Disability Advisory Panel - Item 9.1 - Disestablishment of Strategic Advisors (Disability) - supporting information from Kaeti Rigalsford	3
B.	3 August 2015 - Disability Advisory Panel - Item 9.1 - Disestablishment of Strategic Advisors (Disability) - letter from the Auckland Branch of Blind Citizens New Zealand	7

Save Auckland Council Disability Advisors - Summary of information provided at meeting of Council 29 July 2015

Background

Both Disability Advisor roles within Community Development and Safety have been disestablished as part of the departmental restructure.

These were the only two roles within Council and the CCOs with a dedicated focus on disability, following the restructure in 2013 when the other two part-time Disability Advisor roles were lost.

Money has been transferred from the Community Development and Safety budget to make a contract within the Design department into a permanent role - working on Universal Design for the Auckland Design Manual.

Neither of the current Disability Advisors would be able to apply for that role as they are blind and applicants are required to have design qualifications and the ability to draw.

Council will lose the existing community networks developed by the current Advisors, along with the leadership they provide to enable Council to meet its duties towards disabled people.

Council has won awards and international recognition as a result of the work of the Disability Advisors, most recently the Deaf Aotearoa NZSL in Action award as a result of relationships brokered between Deaf community and Comms and Engagement team, including proving NZSL access to engagement around the Unitary Plan.

What does community say?

Council's Disability Advisory Panel has passed two resolutions this year requesting that Council retain the specialist knowledge and expertise of the two Disability Advisors to enable Council to meet its obligations to disability community.

At the Disability Community forum on the Empowering Communities Approach, the key request was for additional Disability Advisors within Council – they requested ten - to properly reflect the fact that one in four people identify as disabled.

People welcome the Universal Design work being done by the Design Department. However, this does not replace the work done by the Disability Advisors who do much more than provide advice on physical access. They currently support staff training on disability inclusion, ensure that events and consultations can be made accessible, provide a disability perspective on Council and CCO initiatives, and act as a conduit between Council and the disability community.

The Disability Advisor roles do not need to be in Community Development. They could be positioned in other departments, such as Policy. However, Council does need to retain qualified disabled people with expertise and strong internal and external networks in roles providing specific disability advice.

Appendix – resolutions passed by Disability Advisory Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the Disability Advisory Panel held in the Board Room, Ground Floor, Town Hall on Monday, 16 February 2015 at 10.00am.

10 Strategic Advisors (Disability) Overview of Work Programme

Martine Abel and Paul Brown were in attendance to provide a verbal overview of the work they undertake.

Resolution number DIS/2015/8

MOVED by Interim Chairperson H Hickey, seconded by Member S Sherrard:

That the Disability Advisory Panel:

- a) receive the Overview of Work Programme update from the Strategic Advisors (Disability).
- b) acknowledge the speciality of the skills undertaken by the Strategic Advisors (Disability) and request that this be retained.

CARRIED

Minutes of a meeting of the Disability Advisory Panel held in the Board Room, Ground Floor, Town Hall on Monday, 22 June 2015 at 10.00am.

7 Empowering Communities Approach project

Resolution number DIS/2015/36

MOVED by Chairperson C Lansink, seconded by Member D McKenzie:

That the Disability Advisory Panel:

- a) receive the update concerning progress with the Empowered Communities Approach project.

- b) note that the concept of empowered communities applies equally to the disability community throughout Auckland.
- c) reinforce its earlier advice that the specialist knowledge and skills of the Strategic Advisors (Disability) be retained, so Council can be in the best position to understand its obligations to and meet the unique needs of people with disabilities as customers and rate payers.
- d) emphasise to Council that another reason for retaining internal specialist knowledge of disability needs is to provide necessary leadership in this area to Council as a whole.



2 August 2015

Mr Mike Giddey
Administrative Officer
Disability Advisory Panel
Auckland Council
Via email
mike.giddey@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Blind Citizens NZ
Auckland Branch
2/13 Upland Road
Remuera
Auckland 1050
Phone +64 9 520 4242
Mobile +64 21 983 652
Email mary@lansink.co.nz

Dear Mr Giddey

Disestablishment of Disability Advisor roles

We ask that you urgently bring this letter to the attention of the Disability Advisory Panel.

The Auckland Branch of Blind Citizens New Zealand is well aware that the Disability Advisory Panel has already given quality advice to Auckland Council against the disestablishment of the two full time disability advisor roles. At our Annual General Meeting held on 1 August 2015 we resolved to write to the panel to add our voice to that of the panel.

The Auckland Branch earlier wrote to Mayor Len Brown opposing the disestablishment of the roles.

We wish to express our considerable concern, disappointment and dismay that it appears now the disestablishment of these two crucial roles will go ahead.

Auckland Council proudly set up the disability advisor roles early in 2011. Some of the legacy councils had these roles. The reasons for setting up the advisor roles in the merged Auckland Council have not gone away.

The disabled community has unique disability-related needs which Council must meet when providing services to Aucklanders. The 2013 New Zealand Disability Survey makes clear the uniquely vulnerable nature of disabled people. We applaud the policies Council has put in place that are specifically aimed at disabled people, but we remind Council that it also has legal obligations to us that arise from various legislation, including the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

We should not have to advocate for Council to meet our unique disability-related needs. We contribute through our rates and in other ways just like everyone else living in Auckland and we deserve to have equitable access to all services Council provides. If the disability advisor roles are dropped, we will have to apply an

increased volunteer effort to promote our needs to Council, a large and diverse organisation including 21 boards. The disabled community just doesn't have the resources to do that, but again we say we shouldn't have to.

The disability advisors are a central source of skill and knowledge in the complex disability area. They can and do apply this skill and knowledge to help their Council colleagues to understand and meet disability-related needs and bring about inclusion of disabled people in the wider community of Auckland. Indeed they provide leadership to Council staff to remind them that meeting the needs of disabled people as customers and ratepayers is a core function.

The advisors are a resource, not only for matters of service design in its broadest sense, but also for sensitive matters of implementation. In an environment of cost containment their expert advice aids Council to continue to make good decisions about expenditure that affects disabled Aucklanders.

We understand Council is devolving some central functions to local boards. However this will not help disabled people. Disability is a regionwide, national, international issue. It is crucial there is good understanding of Council's policy and legal obligations to disabled people throughout the organisation and CCOs. Both advisors currently play a crucial role in promoting understanding of our needs throughout Council.

We recognise Council might rely more on external consultants to provide advice on disability matters. We acknowledge there are times when it is appropriate to seek external advice. But this cannot be a complete substitute for maintaining competent internal knowledge and expertise in this area.

The disability advisor roles may be disestablished but Council will continue to have the same obligations to disabled people living in Auckland. Council should consider the immense body of knowledge and experience that has been built up over some years that could soon be lost as the two advisors walk out the door for the last time.

We therefore fully endorse the Disability Advisory Panel's advice and call on Council to reverse its decision and retain the disability advisor roles.

Yours sincerely



Mary Schnackenberg
Hon. Secretary
Auckland Branch Blind Citizens NZ