Proposed Christchurch City Council Sustainability Policy

1. Introduction

Sustainability is a word that is used often, yet means different things to different people. This Sustainability Policy seeks to clarify what the City Council means by the term sustainability. This will enable Council policies and strategies to adopt a consistent point of reference for the term and for the related concepts and principles to be incorporated with more consistency into Council activities and decision making.

2. Policy Aim

The Sustainability Policy is one of the high-level Policy Frameworks that have been designed to help guide Council activity.

> This Policy aims to embed sustainability into our Council and community. To help make sustainability "the way we do things around here".

3. Scope

The purpose of the Sustainability Policy is to provide guidance on:
- How the Council, as an organisation, performs in terms of sustainability, e.g. internal resource efficiency.
- The decisions that Council makes, e.g. providing a sustainability compass or a lens through which all proposals can be viewed.
- Enabling our community to be sustainable, e.g. addressing the present and future social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of our community.

4. Context

This Policy forms an important part of the Council commitment to sustainability. It has been designed to capture both the moral and legal responsibilities of Council in terms of incorporating sustainability into its activities and decision making.

At the heart of a democratic society is the responsibility for community leaders to make decisions on behalf of, and in the best interests of, present and future generations. Democratic governance, therefore, encompasses key elements of sustainability, such as, stewardship for the community and for the environment on which it depends.

The Local Government Act 2002 also places a legal imperative onto the Council to adopt a "sustainability approach". This is expressed when the Act defines the purpose of local government (Part 2, Section 10), the principles that relate to local authorities (Part 2, Section 14), and in the requirements for decision making (Part 6, Section 77). The Act identifies four components that the Council must take into account and these are, the social, cultural, economic, environmental well-being of present and future generations. The relationships between these "well-beings" must be expressed more fully, prior to defining sustainability.

4.1 Relationship between the four well beings

The Council recognises that all four well-beings, social, cultural, economic and environmental well being, must be considered and integrated, when thinking about sustainability. It is also important to be aware of the fundamental relationships between these well-beings. These relationships are expressed in the figure below, where the earth or our environment sustains all life. A subset of that life on earth is our society, which includes our various cultures and beliefs. A subset of our society is our economy. These elements are often referred to as Planet / Place, People and Prosperity.

This model demonstrates that our prosperity, culture and society all are underpinned by the life supporting capacity of the environment. It also demonstrates that our economy is a creation of our social system, it is a tool, purposefully designed and controlled to aid human development, it is not an end in itself.

Relationship between the well-beings
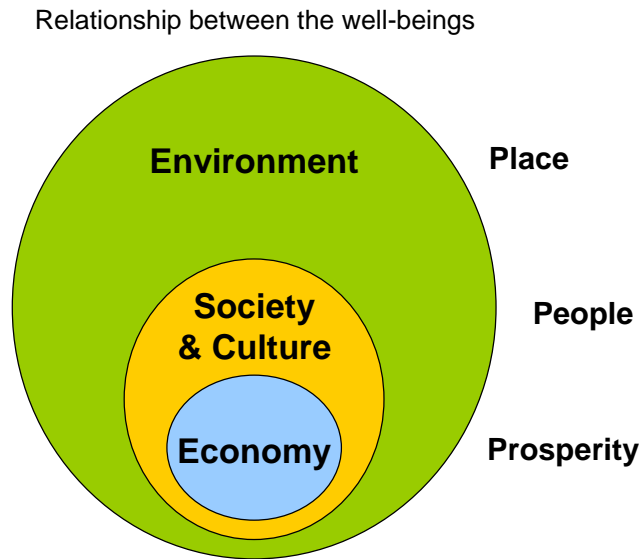
4.2 The pathway towards sustainability

The Council recognises that sustainability is a journey, not a destination. It is not a point that is reached, but a process of continual improvement, where society adapts and responds to changes over time, in a way that recognises the fundamental relationships of the four well-beings explained above. Continual improvement generally follows the steps outlined below. These steps are consistent with the City Council decision-making guide that aim to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002, but other problem solving models may be used in the journey toward sustainability. Central to any approach is the need to engage the community throughout the process. For our society to be on the pathway toward sustainability, its goals and actions must adhere to the sustainability definition and principles contained in this Policy. In some instances, this will require a step change in the way we do things, not just incremental advances. For example, simply reducing the use of toxic substances is not sustainable, they should be eliminated altogether.

5. Sustainability Definition

The Council defines sustainability as:

> A dynamic process of continual improvement that enables all people, now and in the future, to have quality of life, in ways that protect and enhance the Earth's life supporting systems.

This definition of sustainability contains three integral parts and the principles in Section 7:
1. The Earth's life supporting systems (see Section 6.1);
2. Quality of life (see Section 6.2); and
3. The process of continual improvement (see Section 4.2).

6. Policy Goals

6.1 The Earth's Life Supporting Systems
To be sustainable, Council recognises that our society must be Efficient, Cyclic, Solar, Safe and Social.

Criteria	Meaning	Examples
Efficient	Doing more, with less.	Products and services use less resources to achieve their benefits, e.g. energy, water and material efficiency, choosing local products and quality over quantity, public transport and rainwater harvesting.
Cyclic	Closed loop society.	All materials and substances are reduced, reused and recycled and organic material is returned to the soil, e.g. recycling, composting and reuse of water.
Solar	Renewable powered and carbon neutral society.	The extraction or harvest, processing, distribution, use and reuse of goods and services is powered from renewable sources and our society is carbon neutral. Emissions are first reduced, then offset.
Safe	No negative impacts on people and the earth's life supporting systems.	All releases into the air, water, soil are non-toxic, food and fibre are harvested from sustainably managed populations and indigenous biodiversity is protected.
Social	All people, now and in the future, are able to meet their needs.	See Section 6.2

6.2 Quality of Life
The Council recognises that quality of life means all people can meet their needs, both now and in the future. Should any one of these human needs not be met then, the society is not sustainable.

Human Need	Meaning	Examples
Subsistence	Physical and mental health.	Access to quality food, water, sanitation, clothing, housing, health care and community support networks.
Security	Peace of mind, free of harm and fear.	Personal and workplace safety, emergency services, insurance, fair legal system, financial independence.
Freedom	Self determination and equal rights.	Participatory and transparent democracy, equal access, opportunity and rights, wheel chair access, public transport.
Understanding	Able to learn, innovate and adapt.	Sciences, life long learning, schools, universities, libraries, internet, competitive advantage and business opportunity.
Identity	Community, belonging, purpose and self-worth.	Community and workplace relationships and responsibilities, culture and heritage, sporting, social and religious groups.
Affection	Love and inspiration.	Family, friends, reverence for nature, family pets, self-expression, beliefs, social and communication networks.
Leisure	Rest and recreation.	Time and access to pursue interests, active and passive recreation, sports, hobbies, arts, entertainment, sleep.

7. Principles

In working towards sustainability, as defined in this Policy, the Council will adhere to the following principles. These guiding principles need to be considered as a package, with no principle predominating.

Principle	Meaning	Example
Stewardship and Kaitiakitanga.	Each person and organisation has a duty of care for the environment and for each other. *We are all guardians of the future and all must act.*	Shared individual and collective responsibilities, passed down through the generations, to take care of places, natural resources and other taonga, both tangible and intangible. Every person has a duty to avoid remedy or mitigate adverse effects (Resource Management Act 1991, Part 3, Section 17).
Anticipation.	Hold a long-term view, be proactive in addressing issues and consider the needs of future generations. *Prevention is better than cure. Bring tomorrow, into today's decision making.*	Ensure that today's decisions leave a positive and enduring legacy. Think in generations not years. Be proactive in addressing issues and harnessing opportunities. Consider the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations (Local Government Act 2002, Part 2, Section 14).
Holism.	Have a global perspective, thinking of whole systems and their interconnections. *The whole is more than the sum of its parts. We are all in this together.*	Consider whole ecosystems, community-wide and life-cycle impacts and benefits of our decisions and of goods or services used. Optimise the social, cultural, environmental and economic opportunities by taking an integrated approach.
Precaution.	Deal cautiously with risk and irreversible effects. *The less you know about potential consequences the more cautious you should be. Better safe than sorry.*	Scientific uncertainty is not used as an excuse for preventing harm. Setting conservative thresholds for sustainable harvesting and for the allocation of water.
Equity and justice.	Equity within and between generations and justice for all. *A fair and just society with inclusive decision making.*	Egalitarianism. Fair, just and transparent democratic, legal and economic systems. Ensuring that resources are provided to those most in need, including consideration of the needs of future generations.
Collaboration.	Develop and maintain healthy and purposeful relationships that achieve common goals. *Together, we can.*	Sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus for joint community action and shared responsibilities. Working with our community and Treaty Partners to collectively create a better future.
Improved valuation.	Social and environmental factors need proper valuation to enable costs and benefits to be included in our economy and decision making. *Valuing people and the environment.*	Prices of goods and services include social and environmental life-cycle costs. Costs include the use of natural resources and the impact of resulting emissions or waste, e.g. Kyoto Protocol – carbon trading, taxes on alcohol and cigarettes.