

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR TASK FORCE GREEN

Department: Community and Planning

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 The report presents options for additional support for the Task Force Green scheme following a request from Council in May 2021.
- 2 Two options are presented for consideration: increasing the value of vouchers and/or increasing the number of volunteers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

- a) **Considers** options for additional support for the Task Force Green scheme.

### BACKGROUND

- 3 At the 31 May 10 Year Plan Meeting, the following resolution was made by Council:

Moved (Cr Jules Radich/Mayor Aaron Hawkins):

That the Council:

**Request** a report on Taskforce Green and options for possible additional support in time for the Annual Plan 2022/23.

**Motion carried (CNL/2021/117)**

- 4 This report responds to that resolution.

### DISCUSSION

#### What Task Force Green Does

- 5 In 2020/21 Task Force Green volunteers worked for 24,000 hours (approximately 14,000 for Council and 10,000 for community organisations). Based on minimum wage, volunteers provided \$190,000 in labour to community-based organisations and \$270,000 in labour to the Council.
- 6 Volunteers undertook mainly environmental work e.g. maintenance of walkways, native bush, public domains, cemeteries and recreational areas, and graffiti removal from public buildings and spaces. Assistance to Council departments included installing signage, delivering notices,

providing cleans ups, weed management, and minor maintenance. Volunteers also worked for clubs and non-profit organisations (mostly one-off activities like property clean ups).

### **How DCC Currently Supports Task Force Green**

- 7 Since the 1980s the DCC has supported Task Force Green and the employment schemes preceding it. Through the schemes both the long-term unemployed and those yet to start work, gained work skills and, in some cases, paid employment.
- 8 Since 2013 the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has subsidised the employment of six fixed-term Task Force Green Supervisors. In the past five years, an estimated 120 Task Force Green participants (supervisors and volunteers) moved into paid work (part-time, seasonal, or full-time).
- 9 In July 2013 the DCC introduced supermarket vouchers to acknowledge the work of Task Force Green volunteers and in part provide a contribution towards incidental costs after central government stopped its benefit top up to participants.
- 10 Vouchers are provided each week to eligible volunteers (those participating in the scheme a minimum of three days per week). Participants referred from Corrections for Community Service, or from MSD for re-compliance, don't receive vouchers.
- 11 Since 2013 the vouchers have been provided to volunteers for 50 weeks per year. For 2022/23 this has been increased to 52 weeks per year and incorporated into the draft budgets.
- 12 Staff considered what additional support could be provided for Task Force Green, and present two options, increasing the value of supermarket vouchers provided (direct support to volunteers) and/or increasing volunteer numbers.

### **Direct Additional Support to Volunteers**

- 13 There is no perfect mechanism for assessing any increase to voucher value. However, it would be appropriate to index and increase the buying power of vouchers to reflect increased costs.
- 14 In providing this option staff have taken into account increases in overall living costs and utilised the 'general' consumers price index (CPI) which measures the changing price of a fixed basket of goods and services purchased by New Zealand households. The aim of the CPI is to measure price changes of the same sample of products at each outlet over time.
- 15 Since July 2013 the Jobseeker weekly benefit payment for a single person aged over 25 years has risen by \$70.19. Work and Income also provides a Winter Energy payment to all beneficiaries from May to October, including Task Force Green volunteers.
- 16 According to the Reserve Bank of New Zealand inflation calculator, the equivalent value of a \$20 voucher from Q3 2013 is now \$23.10, if increased using 'general' CPI (Q3 2021). If the 'food' CPI is used, the value would be \$22.91.
- 17 A core group of volunteers, who for health or other reasons, cannot move into paid work and therefore regularly attend the scheme, would gain the most from an increase in voucher value. All are beneficiaries, with about half receiving the Jobseeker benefit. The remainder receive other Work and Income benefits.

- 18 In 2022/23, \$31,200 is budgeted for supermarket vouchers for up to 30 volunteers. The table below sets out examples of potential increases.

Voucher Value	Number of Volunteers	Value Per Volunteer/Annum	Annual Cost	Budget
Current \$20	30	\$1040	\$31,200	
\$25	30	\$1300	\$39,000	
\$30	30	\$1560	\$46,800	

### **Increasing Volunteers to Support Work Outcomes and Community Groups**

- 19 Up to 40 volunteers per week participate in the Task Force Green scheme. Around 30 are regular participants with others attending for re-compliance or Community Service.
- 20 Supervisors are Work and Income clients, or volunteers already on the scheme who gain additional work skills by taking on the paid role. Supervisors oversee five volunteers at any one time with volunteer numbers capped. Capping ensures adequate supervision and support is provided to people who are primarily not work ready.
- 21 MSD subsidises Supervisor wages under its Flexi Wage Scheme (\$10,400 per Supervisor). Supervisors can only work a maximum of 26 weeks per year and be re-employed once every 18 months. A current challenge is the fixed-term nature of the role with upskilling supervisors often taking the full six-month work-term.
- 22 A DCC-funded Team Leader oversees the scheme, manages supervisors, leads training, health and safety compliance, work scheduling and provides significant pastoral support to all participants. The Team Leader also manages external relationships with MSD and Corrections for those undertaking re-compliance.
- 23 The Council could consider expanding the scheme with 10 extra volunteers (from 40 up to 50). This would provide more people who are long-term unemployed with upskilling, as well as additional assistance for community organisations. However, more resourcing would have to be provided for both volunteers and supervisors if this occurred, along with practical resources i.e. safety equipment and training.
- 24 The Team Leader would require further support in the form of a full-time Task Force Green Assistant if the scheme expanded. The role would have to be DCC funded but would support both supervisors and volunteers and take sole charge of the scheme when required. There are risks in expanding the programme without this type of resource as the Team Leader is working at capacity.
- 25 The table below sets out forecast costs for 2022/23 if the Council decided to accept 10 new Task Force Green volunteers and approve establishment of a Task Force Green Assistant role.

Budget Items	Forecast Increase to Task Force Green Budget 2022/23
Employment-related costs, Task Force Green Assistant (permanent, full-time)	\$64,500
Volunteer Allowance \$20 x 10 volunteers @52 weeks per year	\$10,400
Operational, maintenance and consumables	\$23,875
<b>Total Increase in 2022/23 Budget</b>	<b>\$98,775</b>

## OPTIONS

### Option One – Increase the value of vouchers provided to eligible Task Force Green volunteers by an agreed amount from 1 July 2022

#### *Advantages*

- The increase provides direct assistance to volunteers to help meet weekly living costs.
- The increase acknowledges the volunteer work undertaken by Task Force Green volunteers for the Council and community.

#### *Disadvantages*

- Any increase is unbudgeted.

### Option Two – Increase volunteer numbers by up to 10 per annum.

This option requires the employment of a Task Force Green Assistant which is required to manage volunteers. However, due to low unemployment there is a risk that there may be a limited number of extra volunteers to manage.

#### *Advantages*

- Provides additional support for the DCC and community organisations to receive assistance through the scheme.
- Provides upskilling for the long-term unemployed and people yet to enter the workforce.

#### *Disadvantages*

- Potential low number of extra volunteers.
- Any increase is unbudgeted.

### Option Three – Status Quo

- 26 Continue to provide \$20 supermarket vouchers to volunteers under the current eligibility criteria.

#### *Advantages*

- Support continues for volunteers on the programme.

*Disadvantages*

- The value of vouchers has remained unchanged since 2013 and does not reflect increases in the cost of living.

**NEXT STEPS**

27 Staff will action any decisions made by Council.

**Signatories**

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**Attachments**

There are no attachments for this report.

**SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS**
***Fit with purpose of Local Government***

This decision enables democratic local decision making and action by, and on behalf of communities and promotes the social and economic well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

***Fit with strategic framework***

	Contributes	Detracts	Not applicable
Social Wellbeing Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic Development Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Arts and Culture Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3 Waters Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spatial Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Integrated Transport Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parks and Recreation Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other strategic projects/policies/plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***Māori Impact Statement***

A number of Task Force Green identify as Māori.

***Sustainability***

There are no known implications for sustainability.

***LTP/Annual Plan / Financial Strategy /Infrastructure Strategy***

Depending on the decision of Council, there may be implications for the Task Force Green budget.

***Financial considerations***

In 2022/23, \$31,200 is budgeted for supermarket vouchers for up to 30 volunteers.

***Significance***

This decision is considered low in terms of the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

***Engagement – external***

Discussion has been held with MSD, who are supportive of both options but can provide no additional funding.

***Engagement - internal***

There has been discussion with Finance.

***Risks: Legal / Health and Safety etc.***

There are no known risks.

***Conflict of Interest***

There are no known conflicts of interest.

***Community Boards***

Task Force Green volunteers work across all Community Boards areas.