

Information for community organisations and our facilities

Why we need formal lease arrangements

We want all organisations operating our facilities to have clear and consistent occupancy agreements in place.

Until now, we've had a mix of arrangements based on historical practice, verbal understandings, letters, expired agreements, or informal agreements. Such arrangements provide no clarity, certainty, or protection for either party.

Leases support fair, transparent, and sustainable arrangements that provide certainty for us and community organisations and help protect valuable community assets for future generations.

Formal leases are mutually beneficial

Provides certainty for everyone	A lease clearly records the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This reduces misunderstandings and provides long-term clarity about use of the facility.
Protects community access to public assets	Our facilities are public assets. Leases help ensure fair, transparent, and consistent management.
Clarifies maintenance and operational responsibilities	A lease helps define responsibilities, including: • Maintenance and repairs • Cleaning and upkeep • Utilities and operating costs • Security and access • Health and safety obligations • Shared-use arrangements This helps avoid future uncertainty or disputes.
Supports good governance and accountability	We have an obligation to manage public assets responsibly and transparently. Formal agreements help demonstrate appropriate governance, financial oversight, and accountability to the community and auditors.

Formal leases are mutually beneficial (continued)

Ensures consistency across organisations	Many groups already operate under formal lease or licence agreements. Bringing all occupiers into similar arrangements helps ensure a fair and consistent approach.
Helps organisations access funding and grants	Many funding providers need evidence of secure tenure or formal occupancy arrangements. A lease can support organisations when applying for grants or external funding.
Supports health and safety compliance	Modern health and safety requirements apply to building owners and occupiers. A lease clearly records these responsibilities so both parties understand them.
Records agreed use of the facility	The agreement sets out: • The spaces being used • Permitted activities • Hours of use • Storage arrangements • Shared-access expectations Specific conditions relating to the site
Helps with future planning and investment	Formal agreements help us plan maintenance, renewals, upgrades, and future use of facilities across the district.
Reduces risk for both parties	A documented agreement helps protect both parties if issues arise relating to: • Insurance • Liability • Property damage • Changes in use • Changes in committee membership or staff
Recognises the organisation's role in the community	A lease provides acknowledgement of the valuable role the community organisation plays in delivering community outcomes. It formalises the partnership between us and the community organisation.

Less formal arrangements may disadvantage both parties

Older arrangements may no longer reflect current requirements	Historical arrangements may have been appropriate at the time they were established, but councils now face significantly stronger governance, legal, health and safety, insurance, and auditing requirements.
Informal arrangements can create uncertainty	Without a formal agreement, there can be differing understandings about: • Responsibilities • Costs • Access rights • Maintenance obligations • Permitted activities • Storage or shared use arrangements A lease provides one current document that everyone can rely on.
Verbal understandings may be lost over time	Committee members, staff, and volunteers naturally change over time. A formal agreement provides continuity and reduces reliance on institutional memory.
Leases provide stronger protection for organisations	A lease gives community organisations documented occupancy rights and clearer tenure arrangements. This supports long-term planning and organisational stability.
Informal arrangements can create risk for both parties	If issues arise –such as disputes, damage, insurance matters, or changes in leadership – the absence of a formal agreement can create uncertainty and increased risk.

Questions and concerns

“We’ve been here for years without a lease — why change now?”	The existing arrangement may have worked well, but we want to ensure all occupancies are covered by clear and consistent agreements. This reflects current governance, health and safety, insurance, and asset management expectations.
“Does this mean Council doesn’t trust us?”	Not at all. We want to formalise and support the relationship clearly and transparently. A lease helps protect both parties as it ensures everyone understands the agreed arrangements.
“Are we going to lose access to the facility?”	No. A lease will provide certainty of occupancy, not weaken it. Formal agreements provide greater security and clarity around ongoing use of the facility.

Questions and concerns (continued)

“Will this suddenly increase our costs?”	Many community occupancy arrangements are provided on a peppercorn or subsidised basis in recognition of the valuable contribution organisations make to the community. In many cases, organisations may instead take responsibility for certain day-to-day maintenance, operational, or upkeep activities as part of the arrangement. Any fees, contributions, or responsibilities would be discussed openly as part of the process. The primary purpose of the lease is to formalise occupancy arrangements and clarify responsibilities, rather than to generate revenue.
“We’re volunteers — this feels too formal or complicated.”	We understand that many community organisations are led by volunteers. Our aim is to keep agreements as straightforward and practical as possible while ensuring key responsibilities and expectations are clearly documented.
“We already have an agreement, letter, or email.”	Those documents are useful background information, but may no longer reflect current operations, responsibilities, or legal requirements. A lease provides a current and comprehensive agreement for both parties.
“What if our committee changes in future?”	That is one of the benefits of a lease –it provides continuity. Future committee members and our staff can rely on a clear written agreement rather than informal understandings.
“Does a lease mean Council has more control over us?”	We already have obligations as the owner of the public asset. A lease simply clarifies how the facility is used and managed. Organisations continue to operate independently, within the agreed terms.
“Why does Council need this now?”	We are reviewing occupancy arrangements across our facilities to ensure consistency, good governance, and appropriate stewardship of community assets across the network.

Working Together

We recognise and value the important contribution community organisations make to the wellbeing of communities across Christchurch and Banks Peninsula.

The intention of formal lease arrangements is to:

- Support strong and sustainable community organisations
- Provide clarity and certainty for both parties
- Ensure fair and transparent management of public assets
- Help protect community facilities for future generations
- Support positive long-term partnerships between us and community organisations.

We are committed to working collaboratively with organisations throughout the process to ensure arrangements are practical, reasonable, and fit for purpose.

Summary

The goal of formal lease arrangements is not simply administrative. It is to ensure a fair, transparent, and sustainable arrangement that supports both the community organisation and us into the future, while protecting valuable publicly owned community facilities for the whole community.