

CHRISRCHURCH HOUSING FORUM NOTES



Date: 11.09.2019

Time: 12.00-2.00pm

Facilitator: Lisa Coulter

Note Taker: Sarah Wang

The following are the summary of housing policies from the mayoral candidates:

Jim Glass

- The climate emergency has stopped the things which council can do. It will cost a lot of money and it is hard to quantify because it's them that can solve the problem. If we allow the stereotype to grow, then we are going to spend more and more money on it.
- Global warming and the rise of sea level are big issues because it impacts on the coastal property and threaten people's lives. The sea apparently rises faster than the land rises. It is a waste of time and effort if we don't face this challenge seriously.
- Balanced opinion in the media is important as we are living in a world overwhelmed by so much information.

Lianne Dalziel

- The Housing Forum is an important gathering where TPA brings tenants, landlords and property developers together to share the common interest.

- Christchurch City Council (CCC) is the second largest landlord in New Zealand (NZ), right after Housing NZ. There are two reasons for that: 1. CCC took advantage of government funding and heavily built houses during 1960-1980s. 2. CCC did not sell those houses in the 1990s like Auckland did.
- Social housings (except the one retained by Housing NZ) in Auckland end up lost in the city.
- Christchurch has the Otautahi Community Housing Trust to make sure the social housings remain the public ownership. However, houses built in 1960s have the problem of not meeting the current standards, eg. no double-glazed window, no insulation. In addition, the insurance settled after the earthquake did not cover the pre-existing conditions, eg. lack of insulation.
- In some cases, it is actually cost-effective to demolish the old houses and rebuild it to fit the current standards. Otautahi Community Housing Trust has over hundreds of planning for next year and more after. We need to work hard on this issue, eg. recovery plan in Shirley area is to build a brand-new community with comprehensive housing development such as parks, safe environment and strong public transportation.
- Increase amount of social housings and affordable housings in the market are what we aim for. It is the time to work with central government and make it happen.

Blair Anderson

- Conversation between the community and government is crucial when it come up with the issue like social housing. It's all about social connectedness. we need to get people around the table and fix the problem by listening to them.
- We should aim for a healthy home environment in Christchurch for tenants with social dignity and integrity.

Darryll Park

- The trend for housing: Less ownership, more rental.
- The most important issue of housing is: What is affordable? The challenge we've got as a city is that it cost so much to build with the land we are building on.
- The key questions with strategic thinking are: Where we build? Who builds? We should go for private partnership with public sector or we continue to let council as prevalent supplier?

- It is important to meet people and listen to their issues.
- The housing will not be substandard; it will be delivered as the fundamental must-do.

Stephen McPaike

My story about being a tenant living in social housing unit can be described as follows:

- We have serious problem of heating as it often comes to 8 degrees in winter or 0 degree without any forms of heating in these units. I usually pay \$350/ month for power to heat up a 50 square meter, uninsulated, two-bedrooms unit.
- There is an announcement from CCC website after the council meeting on 27th Aug. The website says that we want our tenants to live in a healthy, warm, dry home with updated heating. (In my house the heating system is from 1980s which I don't think it's updated at all!)
- The heating issue will have great impact on the tenants and the local economy because as people get sick, the employer needs to find someone to replace them and therefore lose productivity. Moreover, it costs millions of dollars a year in our health system because of the physical and mental illness.
- Personally I believe that the healthy home initiative from central government is a small step but doesn't go far enough. I would like to aim for higher updated insulation, more recent insulation systems and more efficient energy heating and much more! What may cost us a few hundred dollars will save us thousands and millions later.

Peter Wakeman

- Government should be responsible for providing housing, which will free our capital for the rest of the economy (eg. after 2011 earthquake the city used Reserve Bank funding).
- Before that there was a time when people can afford a house until the businessman turned up and made the housing become more expensive. When you take a look at the income and the payment, you will find that Christchurch is an unaffordable city.
- NZ building code is slowly catching up but still far behind if comparing to the overseas standards.

- The problem of CCC now is that we don't know what's happening. We need more information regarding parks, housings so that we can fix things quicker.
- Health and well-being is strongly connected.
- Social housing should be included in the commercial building; temporary support (catering, security, subsidy etc...) should be provided for people in need because usually when people under an extremely stressful situation they can't make good decisions.
- Our aim is to have affordable house relating to income.

John Minto

- Acknowledgement to TPA (who works hard in the background to support people) and Stephen (for standing up, telling his story and bringing this issue to the public).
- There is housing crisis in Christchurch for low-income family as council's waiting list of social housing and state housing are increasing all the time, year by year. At the same time, council's rental housing is going down, year by year. Not only because of the earthquake damage, but also due to the close down of housing complexes because they need refurbishment (52 units closed down this year).
- The council is going backwards with social housing while the demand is increasing. What the council does is that instead of fund them, they just send the builders to board up the windows and wait for the vandals to trash them. That's the pattern.
- The other thing is that Otautahi Community Housing Trust is not a democratic Trust but they were given the job of managing tenancy of council rental houses. The council are now transferring the ownership of the houses from the Council to the Trust. 428 units are transferred. That's like a loan to the Trust.
- It seems to me that these are all evidence of walking away from social housing or rental housing. I think it's because people in those units do not have a strong voice. Council is thinking that those people is not going to vote anyway so we won't worry too much. We just care about the people who vote. The result is that

people from low-income are disillusioned and the number will just increase and increase and increase.

- Government give 300 million dollars to Christchurch for priority, and I think this money should be used in rebuild and refurbish council houses and build more instead of build a rugby stadium.
- Every Monday morning, in South Auckland, 400 children change schools because of unstable housing environment. Therefore, every child in Christchurch should have a warm, dry home before the rugby stadium.
- We have to look after the community first because that's what kind of society we are; for Christchurch I think we are bigger than that.

Q & A Time

1. When can we see the disability access of state houses become more available?

Peter Wakeman:

The problem is that facilities for the disabled cost more and state housing is usually the cheapest and smallest one. Therefore, council should definitely take more responsibility.

Lianne Dalziel:

That's why council encourages more new buildings with healthy life standards.

John Minto:

With rebuilding and refurbishment, it should extend the accessibility for everyone.

Blair Anderson:

At the moment, I'm refurbishing my house with safer bathroom and accessible shower. I'm doing this because I see this as an investment with potential increased market value and accessibility for people who are looking for a safe & sound environment.

2. Social housing is often unsafe for the elderly, is there any plan for improving the environment safety for the old people?

Peter Wakeman:

The key thing is the financial squeeze, so government and council should definitely take responsibility for that.

Stephen McPaike:

As I'm personally the tenants in social housing now, I can see these old units, and there is a lot of old people in the units. Council and Otautahi Trust are slightly replacing these units for better quality. I will continue to fight for better social housing for everyone. The current challenge is the lack of communication between the council, Otautahi and the tenants.

Lianne Dalziel:

In the 1990s, inner city housing known as 'Old Person Housing'. Inner city housing then used for those deinstitutionalised back into the community and turned the social housing into a support environment for those who had come out from institution and become part of the community. The real problem behind the Trust is that the council is actually lack of access to the income-related rental subsidy. The next step would be bringing tenants to the table and building up the partnership.

John Minto:

Only council has the resources and capacity to meet the needs so we have to make sure council face the challenge and not walk away from this.

Darryll Park:

Better governance. Make sure Trust/ tenants gather around the table and make sure something paid immediately to solve the urgent problem rather than just planning for the future.

Blair Anderson:

Landlord should see it as an investment to provide services to tenants. The requirement for heating standards is not well represented by that formula at the moment because the real situation such as double-glazed window does not count. Replacement with more affordable housing eg. Renovation within 2 days for 3 bedrooms, such an effectiveness is where the leadership comes from.

3. Timeframe to achieve these plans?**Stephen McPaike:**

It's my role to know all the building codes eg. insulation will comply to all the social housing in July 2023 (work with private rental). Better social housing within the next 3 years will start with heating. Estimated 10 years for uninsulated houses to be replaced. At the moment are the resources and building codes that slow down the process.

Peter Wakeman:

In my opinion, it is a good time to ask for funding because government are facing another election year.

Simon Atkinson:

1977 is the year that Christchurch city council built most social housing when Hamish Hay was the mayor.

John Minto:

Let's make 2020 the year that we build more social housing than before (beat 1977).

Darryll Park:

What concerns me is another winter - let's start with the short term plan and prepare for the next winter.

Lianne Dalziel:

Heating is the priority in these social housing units. I don't want anyone out on the street. I had tenants who write to me and said they are worried about being kicked out; however, those units need to be closed down for refurbishment. We need to establish the timeframe for building and we will announce that very soon in order to get it back to the pre-earthquake level.

Stephen McPaike - Reply after Lianne Dalziel:

Social housing was built in 1970. Report from CCC Insulation and Heating issue needs to be addressed again and CCC needs to listen to the tenants in the CCC meeting and make the issue more public. It is a complicated issue so I'd like to work with mayoral candidates to get the issue sorted.

4. What is appropriate, what is the standard that constitutes 'dry' for houses? you ask people you get a different answer.

Blair Anderson:

I've been involved in consultation with MBIE while listening to other landlords and being engaged with them, they need a significant improvement. Better relationship needs to be built eg. I do the very best I can for my tenants and that's what keeps us in business.

5. Social Housing should put the right person in housing at the right time when they need it. What about the alternative of sustaining and encouraging private landlords to get the rental market working better? If people can live in the rental they should, many people in Social Housing live there for ages but Social Housing is not going to fix all the problem, so how do we get a healthy rental market?

Peter Wakeman:

Government should pay more for the social housing rather than motels. eg. In the UK they have the charity-run emergency housing for people who are in an accident, divorce, or other emergent situation.

Jim Glass:

With a large number of immigrants coming in to NZ, we are having a high home ownership rates of 66%. (Compare to 30% in Germany/Switzerland) A long-term lease in commercial basis would be the factor.

John Minto:

People in the state housing are facing the situation of when their income goes up, they need to leave the premises. However, they have rooted down in the community. So with their income increase, we should not kick them out but rather let them pay a market rent instead.

Stephen McPaike:

In my case, I have lived in car for 2 weeks until council gave me a unit. However, every year I got sick and my savings are gone. I want to get a decent job and move out, but I can't do that. Also, I love the community and I don't want to leave. However, I know people who need social housing more than I do but I can't move out to afford private rental.

Lianne Dalziel

Inspiration from social housing /Housing NZ / devastation by market rentals is that they are forcing people out onto the streets because these people are paying market rents start from day 1 while they are not decent paid by market wage. Income rental subsidy, trust, decent jobs, building community, are our goals.

Blair Anderson:

For Rental subsidy, as a landlord we manage risk, we need to pay insurance etc... The more we subsidize the rent, the more we are increasing inflation of rent so I see subsidy as a hazard.

Jim Glass:

If people have subsidy for the housing, they have the opportunity to settle down in the society.

Peter Wakeman:

When bankers lend money; the house prices go up and the pay rise is not keeping up with the rent.



Next Housing Forum: 23rd October 2019