

HUTT CITY COUNCILPOLICY AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Report of a meeting held in the Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, 30 Laings Road,
Lower Hutt on

Monday 25 March 2019 commencing at 5.30pm

PRESENT:

Cr MJ Cousins (Chair)	Cr C Barry (from 5.31pm)
Deputy Mayor D Bassett	Cr L Bridson
Cr J Briggs	Cr S Edwards (Deputy Chair)
Cr T Lewis	Cr M Lulich
Cr L Sutton	Mayor WR Wallace (from 5.32pm)

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr T Stallinger, Chief Executive
 Mr M Reid, General Manager, City and Community Services
 Ms W Moore, Divisional Manager, Strategy and Planning
 Mr J Pritchard, Principal Research and Policy Advisor
 Ms O Miller, Policy Advisor (part meeting)
 Mr J Hoyle, Communications and Marketing Advisor
 Ms J Randall, Committee Advisor

PUBLIC BUSINESS1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED: (Cr Cousins/Cr Lewis)

Minute No. PRC 19101(2)

"That the apology received from Cr Milne be accepted and leave of absence be granted."

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments are recorded under the item to which they relate.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

There were no conflict of interest declarations.

4. RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL - 26 March 2019

Homelessness - Council Contribution to Improving the Response to
Homelessness in Lower Hutt (19/278)

Speaking under public comment, **Ms K Patterson, Chair of the Wellington Homeless Women's Trust** (the Trust) advised that the Trust provided support and emergency

accommodation to homeless women in Wellington. She noted the need for housing was increasing and it was more difficult to transition women with the current housing shortage. She encouraged Council to consider the following:

- Safe separate spaces for women in short term and long term accommodation models.
- Social housing, since many homeless were not attractive to the private rental market.
- Social assistance since the reasons for homelessness were complex.
- Housing First was essential to support the at-risk homeless community.

In response to a question from a member, Ms Patterson said she was unsure when Housing First was likely to be established in Lower Hutt. She explained Wellington would continue to be a connection space for the homeless in the region until Housing First was established in Lower Hutt.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr P Matcham, a representative of the New Zealand Grey Power Federation**, advised that older people were facing uncertain housing situations. He noted homelessness in older people was increasing due to factors such as relationship breakdown and ill health. He commended officers and Council on their homelessness work and their focus on long term causes. He considered the underlying reason for homelessness was the lack of affordable homes. He asked Council to address this issue.

In response to a question from a member, Mr Matcham said there was increasing evidence that older people and older women in particular were more susceptible to homelessness than other age groups.

Speaking under public comment, **Mr M Mareko, Team Leader from the Tuatahi Centre**, spoke in support of option one which aligned strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation.

In response to questions from members, Mr Mareko said the centre was hearing from an increasing number of clients who had been given notice by their landlords. He said home owners were increasingly selling their rental properties.

Speaking under public comment, **Ms G Anderson MP, New Zealand Labour Party**, commended Council on the homelessness work undertaken by officers. She considered that option one, which aligned strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation, provided the best opportunity for a long term plan to reduce homelessness. She hoped Central Government and Council would work together to improve the situation in Lower Hutt. She expressed concern about emergency housing because it was unsafe for women and children. She agreed that Housing First was an important partner to assist in providing safer and more permanent housing. She noted that in the current tight rental market tenants were being left homeless and a plan to address the situation was needed. She added there was an opportunity for Urban Plus Ltd (Urban Plus) to provide more social housing including rent-to-own options and to provide housing advice and advocacy for those who could not advocate for themselves.

In response to questions from members, Ms Anderson said if Urban Plus was in control of proposed intensification plans it could better regulate development. She considered it was problematic having single men in emergency accommodation with women and children. She added that if emergency accommodation was necessary, a Police presence would be necessary to ensure safety.

Speaking under public comment, **Ms K Brown**, a long time advocate for the homeless, spoke in support of option one which aligned strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation. She considered a stand-alone agency working with the community on housing issues was needed. She said it was important children were included at both a regional and national level when collecting data on the homeless. She did not consider emergency housing a safe option. She noted alcohol and drug addiction were significant issues for the homeless and advised there was a lack of facilities in Lower Hutt to address these issues.

The Principal Research and Policy Advisor elaborated on the report. He explained temporary shelter for the winter was added to the strategy as a temporary measure until Housing First was established in the city.

In response to questions from a member, the Principal Research and Policy Advisor said there had been no date set for the establishment of Housing First in Lower Hutt. He confirmed Council's data included homeless children. He said officers would work with other organisations to improve data on homeless numbers.

RECOMMENDED: (Cr Cousins/Cr Lulich) **Minute No. PRC 19102(2)**

"That the Committee recommends that Council:

- (i) agrees the proposed strategic approach to homelessness in the city. This includes changing the wording of priority five from 'Improving data on homelessness in Lower Hutt' to 'Improving the understanding of homelessness in Lower Hutt';*
- (ii) agrees the three-year funding proposal in option one to contribute to implementing the Lower Hutt Homelessness Strategy, of Year One: \$560,000; Year two: \$520,000; and Year three: \$520,000;*
- (iii) agrees to review the action plan after the initial three-year period with further funding considered as part of the Long Term Plan;*
- (iv) agrees to work with partners to implement the initial action plan for the strategy;*
- (v) agrees that Council participates in the Governance of Housing First in the Hutt Valley and Wellington along with partners including Iwi, non-governmental organisations, local government and central Government;*
- (vi) forwards the matter to the Community Plan Committee on 5 June 2019 for its consideration; and*
- (vii) agrees to request with some urgency the establishment of a Housing First initiative in the Hutt Valley."*

For the reason that consultation supported the strategic direction agreed by Council in December 2018. The amended wording of priority five reflects that, as well as improving the data, we need to raise the understanding of causes, the impacts,

households affected, in order to more effectively target homelessness.

Our recommended option aligns strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation – and therefore high use of temporary and unsuitable accommodation – and the lack of capacity to respond to the needs of people who are at risk of homelessness or who are experiencing homelessness. The option includes the three elements of contributing to increased access to housing, preventing homelessness, and advice and advocacy.

We will work with partners to implement and monitor the actions and a review of the plan will enable Council to consider longer-term funding as part of its next Long Term Plan.

The Housing First Governance Group being established by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides an opportunity for Council – through the Mayor – to work in partnership with Government, Iwi, and non-governmental organisations on homelessness responses at a regional level, both in terms of Housing First and broader solutions.

Cr Lulich and Mayor Wallace expressed support for option one which aligned strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation.

Cr Barry acknowledged the work of Ms Brown, officers and community organisations in developing the strategy. He suggested Council amended its District Plan to allow for more housing. He proposed investment in good infrastructure to enable districts to grow, including improved transport across the city. He expressed concern that Council was diverting funds for fee waivers and rates remissions for developers. He considered that lack of political leadership from Council was the reason Urban Plus was focussing on property speculation instead of tackling homelessness. He recommended that Urban Plus build homes for the elderly, families and those in need of a helping hand.

Cr Briggs expressed support for option one which aligned strongly with the findings from the research in terms of the service gaps, lack of access to settled accommodation. He acknowledged the work of Ms Brown, officers and the community in developing the strategy. He acknowledged Ms Wolstenholme, a representative of the Salvation Army, for her input to the strategy and the homeless people who had advised Council that change was needed in the 2013 census. He believed that multiple solutions would be needed with Council working alongside other organisations.

Deputy Mayor Bassett expressed support for the recommendations and thanked all those involved in developing the strategy.

Cr Cousins noted good quality social housing was urgently needed from Central Government. She believed the Housing First programme was the best way to provide additional social housing in Lower Hutt and agreed the matter needed urgency.

5. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.27 pm.

Cr MJ Cousins
CHAIR

CONFIRMED as a true and correct record
Dated this 21st day of May 2019