

Horowhenua

DISTRICT COUNCIL



PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LONG TERM PLAN 2015-2025

Community Housing Review Consultation Document

INTRODUCTION

Horowhenua District Council has undertaken a review of Community Housing.

The objective of the Community Housing Review was to:

- Ensure that current and future tenants receive the best possible service to meet their needs.
- Provide an up-to-date assessment of a number of issues relating to community housing stock and delivery.
- Assist Council in confirming its role in community housing.

The review looked at solutions and explored a number of options to improve the sustainability of community housing delivery in the Horowhenua District.

It was timely to carry out this review as Central Government is undertaking a significant Social Housing Reform Programme, which has changed what financial assistance Council can access. The provision of community housing by the Horowhenua District Council is a discretionary activity, it is not deemed core council service as outlined by Government. Taking this in to account when considering its role within the wider community housing market, the Council must determine the

need for community housing in the District, the role the Council takes in providing community housing, and how to best fulfil this role.

The following consultation paper provides information related to the review and outlines recommendations that Council want to hear your feedback on.

The Proposal

The review highlighted the importance of a sustainable community housing model for the Horowhenua but identified that Horowhenua District Council may not be the best organisation to lead this activity moving forward.

Council wants to hear your feedback on the proposition that:

- Horowhenua District Council no longer provides Community Housing as a core Council service;
- Horowhenua District Council seeks expressions of interest from Community Housing Providers for the stock transfer of Council's Community Housing Portfolio;
- Horowhenua District Council continues to take a leadership role in advocating and facilitating for wider community issues with regard to accessibility and affordability of quality housing.



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Over the past 12 months we have been working hard to complete a review of Council's Community Housing portfolio. The review provided Council with information which suggested there is a better way at managing the provision of community housing into the future.

Horowhenua District Council is committed to finding a long term sustainable community housing model which ensures that not only residents have access to affordable housing, but that housing provision is also connected to those services which will enhance social connectedness and wellbeing.

This consultation document will provide you with an overview of the key issues that have been identified by Council when considering this proposal, and will answer some questions you may have on what is proposed.

It is important you take the opportunity to read this information and provide feedback to Council. We want to ensure that residents and ratepayers are well informed and get to have their say. Have a look at what we are proposing and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.



On behalf of our Council, we are proud to be working for all of our residents and ratepayers to make Horowhenua a more vibrant and sustainable District.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B J Duffy'.

Brendan Duffy
District Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DM Clapperton'.

David Clapperton
Chief Executive



THE PROCESS AND TIMEFRAMES

Having a current Long-Term Plan (LTP) is a legal requirement for all Councils in New Zealand. Council's LTP lays out the direction for Council for the next 10 years. Council adopted the 2015-2025 Long Term Plan in June 2015, and since then the Community Housing Review has been completed.

The proposal that Council wants to hear your feedback on would require a change to the current 2015-2025 Long Term Plan. Any change means we need to thoroughly consult with the community, and follow those requirements set out in the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002.

Because we are proposing an amendment to the Long Term Plan, Council is required to produce a consultation document, which is required to be audited by Audit New Zealand under Section 93D(4) of the Local Government Act. The consultation document is intended to be a more effective way of engaging with the public.

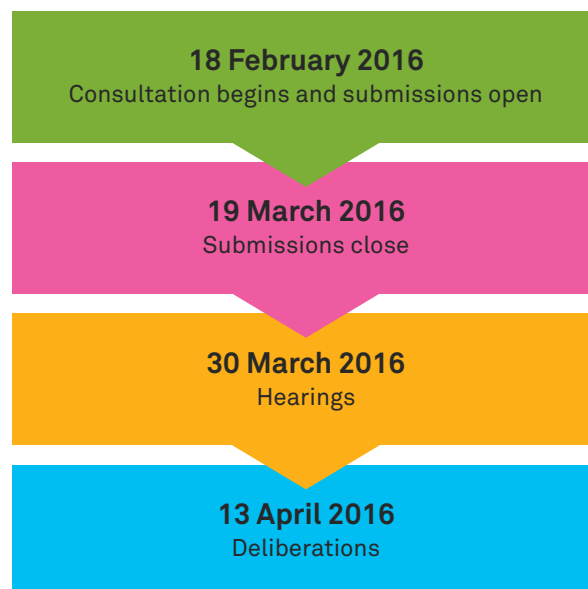
When you make a submission, there is a certain process we follow to make sure that your thoughts and suggestions are appropriately considered, researched, and presented to Councillors for their consideration.

When you submit, we ask you whether you would like to speak to your submission. While this is not compulsory it is a good chance to clarify or emphasise any points to Councillors and it gives them the opportunity to ask questions about your submission.

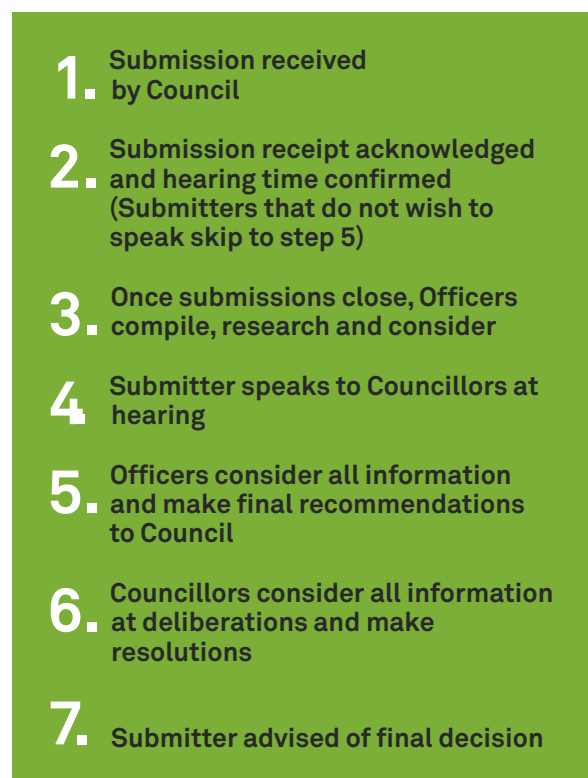
Regardless of whether or not you speak to your submission, Council Officers will consider all submissions and prepare a final report with draft recommendations to Council.

It is important to remember that any recommendations made by Council Officers are recommendations only. Final decisions lie in the hand of Councillors and may be different from the Officers' recommendation. After deliberations, you will be informed of the Council's final decision with regard to your submission.

Timeframes



The Process



HOW YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY AND FIND OUT MORE

During the consultation period, Council Officers and Elected Members will be available to speak to any ratepayer or resident about the Consultation Document or Draft LTP Amendment.

If you wish to make an appointment with a Council Officer, please contact Council by phone on (06) 366 0999 or email enquiries@horowhenua.govt.nz. If you wish to speak to an Elected Member then please contact them directly. Their contact details are available at the end of this document or online at www.horowhenua.govt.nz/Council/YourCouncil/Mayor--Councillors/

Submissions on the Proposed Amendment to the LTP close on Saturday, 19 March 2016. Submitters are encouraged to prepare their submission using the submission template which is available at the end of this document, online at www.horowhenua.govt.nz/communityhousing or at Council offices and community libraries.

Levin Office

126-148 Oxford Street
Levin 5510

Te Takere

10 Bath Street
Levin 5510

Shannon Service Centre

Located in the Shannon Library.
Plimmer Terrace
Shannon

Foxton Service Centre

Located in the Foxton Library.
5 Clyde Street
Foxton

Submitters who wish to speak to their submission will have the opportunity to be heard on 30 March 2016. Deliberation on all submissions will then take place on 13 April 2016.



SNAPSHOT OF HOROWHENUA DEMOGRAPHICS AND AFFORDABILITY

Horowhenua has a low-income ageing population.

Approximately two-thirds of the growth in low income renters was in one person households aged 50 years and older. A total of 41.9% of all renter households are low income renter households that earn less than \$30,000.00 per annum.

Population growth in the District is forecast to be flat however household growth is expected to increase from 13,000 in 2011 to 13,700 in 2026, without taking into consideration any migratory factors influenced by major infrastructure projects in the region.

There is a significant affordability issue for renter households. Less than half of renter households can afford to rent a dwelling at the lower quartile market rent (\$190 per week).

House prices and rents are lower than other areas however with the District's current low income profile there are still significant affordability pressures within the community in particular for low income renters.

Medium house prices are forecast to come under significant pressure due to their relatively low values relative to the surrounding Districts. This will present significant housing affordability issues for key sector low income workers in the District.

Average rents have increased faster than household income across the District with rents increasing by 27.9% from 2006-2014 versus household income growth of 2.4% per annum.

There is a significant under supply of smaller dwellings relative to the projected increase in demand for households.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY HOUSING?

Community Housing is rental housing provided either by central or local government, or non-government not-for-profit organisations (NGO's), usually with the aim of providing affordable housing. Community housing is targeted at people with a set of risks or vulnerabilities that predispose them to social and economic disadvantage.

Government agencies, including Housing New Zealand and the Social Housing Unit (a semi-autonomous unit with the Department of Building and Housing), collaborate with NGOs and Community Groups to provide more housing for New Zealanders on low incomes or with special housing needs.

COUNCIL'S CURRENT COMMUNITY HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Pensioner housing currently provided by Council is made up of 115 units across eight locations with five of the eight complexes being located in Levin.

The portfolio has a current rateable value of \$6.95 million; and has a Council book value \$7.35 million.

The portfolio was largely built using Crown loans, with the most recent upgrade and new build programme completed in 2006 via internal Council debt funding of \$5,218 million and a Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) suspensory loan of \$5,218, million. The Council debt funding provided by Council's internal Treasury is currently being serviced on an interest only basis at a rate of 5.13% (total cost of capital).

The portfolio has an average age of 39.7 years. In 2009, it had 75 units upgraded and a further 40 new units completed.

The portfolio consists of single-level units constructed out of a range of materials consistent with the period in which they were constructed. Size wise the portfolio ranks in the third decile of Council-owned pensioner housing assets, and is roughly on par in size with similarly sized Districts in other parts of New Zealand. The condition of the units ranges from good to excellent, due to the recent upgrade programme completed by Council.

The units are currently rented at about 96% occupancy.

Targeting

To be eligible for Council's community housing, the 'targeted market' is pensioners with limited financial resources and people over 60 with a disability. The eligibility procedures are via a self-disclosure process with no formal checks being required.

Rental policy

Under existing Council policy, rental rates are set at market rates and assessed on a complex by complex basis, by an independent valuer. Current rental rates range from \$135 - \$170.00 per week with an average weekly rental rate of \$150.78 per unit. This average rental rate is \$1.12 below the regional average for the Horowhenua/ Manawatu area which is \$152 per week for a 1 bedroom unit. On this basis, there is very little scope to increase the rental levels.

If the portfolio was transferred to a Community Housing Provider (CHP), the tenant could potentially receive a Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS) and the tenant would only pay 25% of their gross weekly income, which based on current NZ superannuation rates tenant could up to be approximately \$61.00 per week better off, based on current Council rental rates (subject to individual household circumstances).

A tenant cannot receive both an IRRS and an accomodation supplement. The level of subsidy attached to an IRRS is significantly greater than the accomodation supplement as IRRS results in the tenant not paying more then 25% of their net income towards cost of their rent.

Current Situation Analysis

What is the issue with the current situation?

An analysis of the Council's current provision of pensioner housing has highlighted the following issues:

- The service levels currently provided by Council are not sustainable in the medium to long term without significant operational and capital expenditure being made.
- Council plays an important part in the delivery of housing options for older persons within the community; however this could improve and be far more sustainable in the future with a more focused delivery model.
- The demand for affordable housing is set to increase.
- The Horowhenua District population is ageing but there is a lack of appropriate affordable housing.
- Central Government reform excludes Councils accessing social housing funding.
- The need for community housing in the Horowhenua is forecasted to increase.
- Just maintaining a status quo situation will need serious consideration by Council on how it will continue to adequately fund the current portfolios improvements let alone any future redevelopment activities in the medium to long term (15-20 years). Council estimates in the next 20-25 years Council may be faced with requirement to replace up to 50-65% of the total portfolio, which would mean Council will need to find approximately \$4.3 million dollars in additional capital which would increase ongoing operational costs. These operational costs are currently not reflected in the LTP and it is likely that future costs will exceed the current.

Options Analysis

The review evaluated a range of potential future business models for Council and the wider Horowhenua community housing sector.

A total of 22 options were assessed with a number being discounted for further review, including:

- Council disposes of the portfolio on the open market.
- Gifting of improvements and leasing of land.
- Council commits to increase its role in community housing delivery.

Council believes there are two options that will achieve the outcome of a more sustainable community housing model being:

- Option 1 - Stock transfer of Council's to a CHP
- Option 2 - Creation of a single Horowhenua Housing Trust

Option 1

Current Situation Analysis Advantages of this approach

- ✓ The CHP may be able to access central government funding not available to Council to expand the number of units or upgrade the units to provide a better quality of life for tenants.
- ✓ Access to income-related rent subsidies means a CHP would be able to provide rents below market value, ensuring that accommodation remains affordable. Note that current tenants eligibility for income-related rent subsidies would be assessed on an individual basis.
- ✓ Central government restrictions applying to approved providers ensures that the service they deliver is good for the community and that social housing will remain in the future. Community housing providers have standards which they are required to meet. These are regulated by the Community Housing Regulatory Authority.
- ✓ As social providers, CHPs are in a better position than Council, or the private sector, to provide the support required by some elderly tenants. Some

CHPs are specialist providers in this market.

- ✓ The CHP sector is an expanding sector nationally and has access to significant funding which is not available to local authorities or CCOs. If Council sells the units to a CHP this would open up the Horowhenua market and possibly lead to further investment in this area by that provider.
- ✓ The welfare of current tenants may be negotiated as part of any sale and purchase agreement; note that this may impact on the purchase price and details of which will be determined by Council at a later stage.
- ✓ Moves the focus of social housing away from central and local government towards a third sector, in line with central government reform.
- ✓ Complies with changes to the Local Government Act 2002, directing Councils to focus on core services.
- ✓ Proceeds from the sale of the pensioner housing will reduce Council debt as signalled in the Long Term Plan 2015-2025 Amendment, therefore lower debt levels.
- ✓ The Council's objectives for pensioner housing would still be achieved, but by an alternative provider.
- ✓ Transfer of the contingency to repay central government housing loan earlier than anticipated as a result of transfer.

Disadvantages of this approach

- ✗ Council will no longer have direct control of the provision of social housing in the District, other than through any provisions included in a Sale and Purchase Agreement.
- ✗ Slight increase to the General Rate to cover council's internal overhead costs that were formally allocated to the Community Housing Activity.

Option 2

Current Situation Analysis Advantages of this approach

Option 2 would have very similar advantages to those identified in Option 1. Option 2 however is ambitious given the considerable amount of resource and time required to establish such a Trust. The level of uncertainty around Government extending the IRRS benefit to a new housing entity places uncertainty around some of the advantages identified in Option 1.

Disadvantages of this approach

As option two "Creation of a single Horowhenua Housing Trust has the following risks and limitations:

- x A commitment by Council to support the establishment of the Trust, which may include seed funding.
- x Uncertainty of Government support for such a model and access to Government income related rent subsidies (IRRS).
- x The options present a higher level of risk and uncertainty to Council and most importantly the tenants in terms of surety of delivery and sustainability without significant Council and Government support.
- x Council would be unlikely to recover its existing outstanding debt liabilities.
- x Slight increase to the General Rate to cover council's internal overhead costs that were formally allocated to the Community Housing Activity.

We want to hear from YOU!

Status Quo

The community may want Council to consider retaining the status quo. While Council does not believe that this option is sustainable we would love to hear your feedback.

Of the two options, Council's preference is Option 1.

We believe that the community ownership and management of Council's portfolio is a logical next step for community housing delivery in the District.

Council is proposing that a Community Housing provider is best placed to provide this service for our community. The Council may decide to sell the units to a specified; government approved, Community Housing Provider (CHP). Such providers must adhere to stringent requirements around the quality of housing and maintenance and be committed to the ongoing provision of community housing. The Council may investigate opportunities for retaining some involvement with local housing through a relationship with the CHP.

Why is this our preferred option?

- This proposal best responds to the factors considered during the Community Housing Review.
- The Council wants to ensure a wider range of social housing needs in Horowhenua are met. This option provides an opportunity for those most skilled in social services and support to have a greater role in delivering an important service to our community by purchasing the Council units.
- Social housing providers have access to Government funding through the Social Housing Fund and income related rents. This may provide opportunities to grow social housing available in Horowhenua and for investment to occur in the social housing sector, something which the Council cannot do.
- Social housing providers may offer wider wrap-around social services such as meals, outings, social services and health care.

What does it mean for tenants?

If following consultation Council determines that it wishes to transfer the stock to a Community Housing Provider, all properties would be retained as social housing for the district. This would be a condition of any sale and would be written into any sale and purchase agreements.

This means that existing tenants would be able to stay on in their units. This would be a condition of any sale.

Over time as units become available, new tenants may be introduced based on the Government's new eligibility criteria which is set out by the Ministry of Social Development. This would likely make the units available to a wider group of people in need, rather than only to older citizens.

Based on our review of Council's Housing Policy there are a number of tenancy rights and welfare benefits enjoyed by Council's current tenants that should be protected. These are:

Rental allocation: The units are targeted at 'low income' persons 55+ with an allocation preference for qualifying persons 65+.

Security of tenure: There is an unwritten expectation that tenants can remain in their tenancies so long as they pay their rent, are capable of independent living, and do not become a nuisance to other occupiers.

Minimum unit standards: Council's policy for service levels is based on providing a basic level of service delivery at a standard that seeks to maintain the status quo. Any potential owner should be expected to maintain this level of service and where possible demonstrate a long term commitment to improve it especially where there is a significant level of discount being applied.

The expectation would be that all current tenancy rights and benefits remain protected for the term of their tenure and any new tenancies would loosely fit within Council's allocation policies.



How would this affect the 2015-2025 Long Term Plan?

If after consultation, Council went ahead with what has been proposed, the Long Term Plan 2015-2025 would require amendment. If Council were able to achieve a successful stock transfer the reference of Pensioner Housing would be removed from the Long Term Plan 2015-2025 except to include Council's role in advocating for accessible and affordable community housing.

If either option 1 or 2 went ahead the changes you would see in the Long Term Plan would include:

- Removal of all Revenue attributed to Pensioner Housing.
- Removal of all Expenditure attributed to Pensioner Housing (both operational funding and capital funding).
- Removal of all performance measures attributed to Pensioner Housing.
- Reduction in total assets.
- Reduction in Council's debt by 7%
- Reduction in interest costs on that debt servicing \$367k
- Slight increase in the General Rate by 0.3% (in 2017/2018) to cover internal overhead costs that were formally covered by the rental income of the Housing Activity. This amounts to an increase in rate take by \$99,000 averaging \$5.50 per household. This will depend on your land value.
- Council will no longer deliver pensioner housing as level of service, therefore this will be removed from the Long Term Plan.

These changes will have a flow on affect to Council's Financial statements outlined in Section 4 of the Long Term Plan 2015-2025.

When determining conditions of sale, Council may look to include some elements of accountability and monitoring of the CHP in the short term to ensure

that what was expected was been provided. Council does not envisage any conflicts of interest arising from the proposed transfer of assets.

A copy of further information which includes a revised copy of the Property Activity Statement and Councils Financial Statements can be found on Councils website www.horowhenua.govt.nz/CommunityHousing, or alternatively call Council to have a copy sent to you. This copy of supporting information serves the purposes provided for in Section 93D (3) of the Local Government Act which sets out Council's opportunity to make available attached to it's a consultation document a copy of the proposed amendment to the long-term plan, if the local authority considers that the full copy of that proposed amendment will assist people to understand the amendment.

Assumptions

Council have made the following assumptions throughout this process:

- The Crown agree to the transfer of the Housing New Zealand Suspensory Loan to a CHP. The transfer of the suspensory loan from Council to the CHP would be part of the condition of sale.
- The expected revenue from proceeds of the sale will align with the debt reduction projections anticipated in the Amended LTP 2015-2025.
- The sale will not proceed if Council's expectations are not met.
- The stock transfer won't come into affect until July 2017.
- Community Housing Providers will be able to negotiate funding with government to maintain or enhance levels of service.
- Council will work to ensure that tenancy rights are protected as part of any transfer.

Next steps

We want to hear from **YOU!**

Council wants to hear your feedback on whether you agree with Council's proposal that:

- Should Council seek expressions of interests from Community Housing Providers for the stock transfer of Council's Pensioner Housing Portfolio?
- Should Horowhenua District Council continue to take a leadership role in advocating and facilitating for wider community issues with regards to accessibility and affordability of quality housing?
- Should Council no longer provide pensioner housing as a core Council service?

We want to hear from you! Head back to page 3 to learn more about how you can have your say, fill in the form on the next page. Visit our website at www.horowhenua.govt.nz/communityhousing or call us on (06 366 0999).



**Independent Auditor's Report
on Horowhenua's consultation document
for the proposed amendment of its
2015-25 long-term plan**

I am the Auditor-General's appointed auditor for Horowhenua District Council (the Council). Section 93D of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) requires an audit report on the Council's consultation document for the proposed amendment of the 2015-2025 long-term plan (long-term Plan). I have carried out this audit using the staff and resources of Audit New Zealand. We completed this audit on 18 February 2015.

Opinion

In my opinion:

- the consultation document for the proposed amendment of the long-term plan provides an effective basis for public participation in the Council's decisions about the proposed amendment, because it:
 - fairly represents the reasons for and implications of the proposed amendment; and
 - identifies and explains the main issues and choices facing the Council and district, related to the proposed amendment; and
- the information and assumptions underlying the information in the consultation document related to the proposed amendment are reasonable.

Basis of Opinion

We carried out our work in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards and the:

- International Standard on Assurance Engagements (New Zealand) 3000 (Revised): Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information;
- International Standard on Assurance Engagements 3400: The Examination of Prospective Financial Information, and
- ethical requirements in those standards.

We assessed the evidence the Council has to support the information and disclosures in the consultation document. To select appropriate audit procedures, we assessed the risk of material misstatement and the Council's systems and processes applying to the preparation of the consultation document.

We did not evaluate the security and controls over the publication of the consultation document.

Responsibilities of the Council and auditor

The Council is responsible for:

- meeting all legal requirements relating to its procedures, decisions, consultation, disclosures, and other actions associated with preparing and publishing the consultation document and long-term plan whether in printed or electronic form;
- having systems and processes in place to provide the supporting information and analysis the Council needs to be able to prepare a consultation document and long-term plan that meet the purposes set out in the Act; and
- ensuring that any forecast financial information being presented has been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice in New Zealand.

I am responsible for reporting on the consultation document, as required by section 93D of the Act. I do not express an opinion on the merits of any policy content of the consultation document.

Independence

We have followed the independence requirements of the Auditor-General, which incorporate those of the External Reporting Board. Other than our work in carrying out all legally required external audits, we have no relationship with or interests in the Council or any of its subsidiaries.

Debbie Perera

Audit New Zealand

On behalf of the Auditor-General, Palmerston North, New Zealand

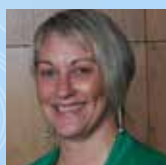
Horowhenua District Councillors



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Ph. 0274 433 516



Garry Good
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Kaye-Simmons**
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Amanda Street
Ph. 021 920 067



Basil Vertongen
Ph. 027 449 8734

Foxton Community Board

2015-2025 PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LONG TERM PLAN COMMUNITY HOUSING REVIEW CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Horowhenua 
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Contact Us

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enquiries@horowhenua.govt.nz

For more information go to
www.horowhenua.govt.nz

2015-2025 PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LONG TERM PLAN COMMUNITY HOUSING REVIEW CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

SUBMISSION FORM

Horowhenua District Council has undertaken a review of its Social Housing activities, with the aim of ensuring that existing and future tenants receive the best possible service.

The review has been prompted by changes in the way central government funds social housing and looks to identify ways of enhancing the delivery of social housing for the benefit of our community. In future, Government support for social housing will be channelled through Community Housing Providers and as a result, opportunities are developing that could lead to better and more affordable housing for those of our District most in need.

Our district is expecting a large increase in the number of older people in our district and an increasing issue of housing affordability. Both are key issues which the future provision of social housing will need to address.

Council wants to hear your feedback on the proposition that:

- Horowhenua District Council no longer provides Pensioner Housing as a core Council service;
- Horowhenua District Council seeks expression of interest from Community Housing Providers for the stock transfer of Council's Pensioner Housing Portfolio;
- Horowhenua District Council continues to take a leadership role in advocating and facilitating for wider community issues with regard to accessibility and affordability of quality housing.

We believe that the community ownership and management of Council's and Housing New Zealand's portfolio is a logical next step for social and affordable housing delivery in the District. The Council is now seeking the community's views on the future provision of community housing before it makes a decision on how to proceed. Please fill out this form and return it to us by 19 March 2016. Make sure you provide your contact details over the page so we can let you know the outcome of the review.

Proposal

Horowhenua District Council no longer provides Pensioner Housing as a core Council service.	Y / N
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Horowhenua District Council seeks expression of interests from Community Housing Providers for the stock transfer of Council's Pensioner Housing Portfolio.	Y / N
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Horowhenua District Council continues to take a leadership role in advocating and facilitating for wider community issues with regards to accessibility and affordability of quality housing.	Y / N
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Remember submissions close at 5pm Saturday 19 March 2016. Drop your submission to Horowhenua District Council offices or post to Private Bag 4002, Levin, 5540.

COMMUNITY HOUSING REVIEW SUBMISSION FORM

Contact Details (You must provide your contact details for your submission to be considered)

Full Name:		Are you a current Council tenant?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation:		Do you wish to be heard by the Council?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal Address:		I wish to speak to my submission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post code:		I do not wish to speak to my submission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone:	Mobile:		
Email:			

Submission

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2002, your submission will be made available to the public. The Council may redirect your submission, where it relates to another process or to another Council. If this occurs you will be advised in writing.