

The Committee considered a report from Councillor Carole Anderton, Rob Dally (Property Manager) and the Reverend Canon David Morell, on their recent visit to Australia to visit a cross-section of groups with an interest in social housing in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide.

The purpose of the report was to:

- (a) Articulate learning points from the visit of Councillor Carole Anderton, the Reverend Canon David Morrell and the Council's Property Manager, Rob Dally.
- (b) Put in place initiatives as a result of the learning points.
- (c) Consider options and make recommendations for management of the Gloucester Courts Housing Complex.

The report provided details of the interviews with social housing organisations in Australia, and the information obtained from the visit in respect to:

- Tenancy issues
- Social support/welfare service issues
- Rental issues
- Asset issues
- Special issues

OPTIONS FOR MANAGING GLOUCESTER COURTS

The report detailed three options for the management of the new Gloucester Courts complex as follows:

- (i) **Option 1** – Property management services (tenancy / reactive maintenance / asset management) provided by the Council with 20% of the units (seven or eight special need tenants) being referred to the Council by a group of nominated social agencies with the proviso that those agencies sign protocols with the Council to establish / provide / monitor appropriate support services for the special needs tenants referred.
- (ii) **Option 2** – a trust is established by nominated and interested social agencies. The trust would employ a part time manager to carry out tenancy / reactive maintenance services for the complex, including the management of all tenants on the basis of an 80 / 20 mix as previously suggested in Option 1 plus special needs support for the 20% special need tenants. The Council carries out the programmed asset management.
- (iii) **Option 3** – similar to option 2 with a trust established appointing a part time manager who decides the tenants (80 / 20 policy agreed with the Council); the Council bills rental and provides reactive plus programmed maintenance; part time complex manager provides / facilitates social support.

CONCLUSIONS

The visiting delegation reported that the visit to Australia clearly reinforced how well the Christchurch City Council is operating in terms of delivering affordable housing without direct recourse to central government funding which is atypical of the Australian environment.

Homelessness and the despair it brings were very evident in Australia. We are indeed fortunate that Christchurch does not have the same levels of homelessness experienced in Australia and perhaps does not have the same manifestation of problems that are causing that homelessness.

There is clearly a need for all Christchurch agencies dealing with our socially disadvantaged to work co-operatively so as to ensure that services, including support to those with multiple disabilities / disadvantage are appropriately funded and provided without duplication, enabling the socially disadvantaged to live independently. The Council, as a significant owner / provider of affordable housing is currently reviewing the level of social support and activities that it is providing, so it is indeed timely to be reviewing this issue in the light of the Australian experience.

In Australia, the social support is funded by Commonwealth / State Governments channelled through Housing Associations and other agencies. There is a need for Christchurch community agencies and the Council to review this matter at a strategic level, taking whatever action is necessary to ensure appropriate levels of social support are available to those in the community with multiple disability / disadvantage. A housing forum hosted by the City Council would seem a sensible start to such an initiative.

The matter of the Council using operationally surplus land for joint venture housing developments with a mix of affordable and traditional housing seems a sensible way of leveraging good financial outcomes whilst minimising risk. The Council has previously agreed in principle to such an arrangement with its Hornby housing development.

The matter of reviewing our procedures with regard to rent arrears came through loud and clear on our Australian visit where housing associations were reliant on rents for the major part of their cashflow.

The issue of increased tenant participation in the delivery of their housing is an interesting concept worthy of further consideration.

The matter of public pay phones and the furnishing of the four bedroom Gloucester Courts units needs further consideration.

Innovative ways of converting central city heritage / warehouse type buildings to affordable accommodation could serve dual purposes and needs on-going consideration.

Housing research is being funded by Commonwealth / State Government in Australia and the equivalent does not seem to be taking place in New Zealand. The Council would seem to have two options in this area; either fund/part fund Christchurch specific housing research or lobby Government to undertake this activity nationwide in an overt and consultative manner.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that:

1. Management Option 1 in the report be adopted for the management of Gloucester Courts, allowing for the possibility of transferring this responsibility to a social housing trust or similar body, subject to review and report to the Community Services Committee after six months.
2. A forum be hosted for social agencies and other key players to discuss social housing issues in Christchurch.
3. Joint venture development opportunities for stage 2 of the Council's Hornby housing project be progressed so as to bring in private sector capital / expertise and to minimise risk.
4. Rent collection procedures be reviewed.
5. Options for increasing tenant participation in the delivery of housing services be considered and reported back to the Council with recommendations.
6. The following matters be considered with regard to the Gloucester Courts development and reported back to the Community Services Committee with recommendations:
 - Public pay phones
 - Peepholes in external doors and the bedroom doors of the four bedroom units.
 - Lockable bedroom doors in the four bedroom units with a front door master key.
 - The provision of lockable food lockers in the four bedroom units.
 - The provision of small refrigerators in the bedrooms of each of the four bedroom units.
 - Partnership funding for furnishing of four-bedroom units.

7. Favourable consideration be given to prospective tenants at Gloucester Courts who have lived / worked in the inner city over the preceding two years.
8. Central Government be lobbied to carry out appropriate research on future housing needs.