

Luke Pickering,
PO Box 5418,
Christchurch.
14 May 2004.

Christchurch City Council,
Our Community Plan – Christchurch.
Freepost 178,
CHRISTCHURCH.

Submission to CCC Long Term DRAFT Community Plan 2004 - 2014.

With respect to these submissions I note that I have been waiting for information from the council since mid-april, and have indicated, to Mr Geoff Barnes, from this time, and again on the 5th May, that I wish to make a submission. I have further indicated to Mr Barnes that I consider the time period given for myself to collate information and make a formal and reasoned submission to this plan is grossly inadequate. I still have not received much of the information requested from Mr Barnes but have made various submissions as tabled below based upon the small amount of data received to date. In the event that further information is received by the time of speaking to these submissions I may need to modify them as appropriate.

I wish to indicate to the committee hearing such submissions, and the person(s) who manages this process that three weeks or less is insufficient time for most people to prepare submissions (information about this was received by us in mid-april) and that I suggest a period of three months would be more reasonable.

Please find my submissions as tabled below.

I refer to Vol 3 Financial Information/Financial Policies, page 112, Differential System Used, Sector C – Rural Properties.

1. I submit that sections (a), (b), (i), (ii) should be removed from this definition, therefore leading the intent and principle of this section to read that Rural Properties should “include(s) any rating unit which is: zoned rural under the transitional district plan etc ... and situated outside of the sewerred area.”
- Reasoning: To be zoned as rural implies certain liberties and restrictions upon landowners that are clearly set out in the City Plan. Land may be used for a wide range of purposes (agricultural, horticultural, pastoral etc) but not sub-divided into small sections, nor expect many of the services and amenities offered to a residential landowner. There is no need to further confuse and differentiate the type of activities that a landowner might undertake on his or her land in order to identify that land as being rated in some way different to its zoning. Furthermore since many of these (rural zoned) properties are a significant distance from the city, and do not have bus services, footpaths, street lights, traffic calming measures etc their cost to the council is considerably less. This reduced cost is further enhanced by the lower density of housing found in the rural sector. Where (city) water and sewerage is used this is covered by the targeted rate(s), thus there is no negative impact on the council finances and no need to differentiate rates from zones. Finally in the event that Council were to differentiate rates from zones it would be necessary for council staff to constantly monitor the land use since, given the nature of rural property, this could change from year to year, owner to owner, or even season to season, leading to higher, and unnecessary costs for such a small percentage of the overall rate intake.

I refer to Vol 3 Financial Information/Financial Policies, page 38, conclusions for operational expenditure funding.

1. I submit that in respect of the general conclusions, paragraph 1, that in fact in many activities there *are* practical ways to charge, and that the council is merely choosing the easy way out and unduly burdening the non-user of these activities. For instance the rural landowner who does not have access to bus at his or her gate, does not use a council park, nor a council creche. Likewise the owner of a small storage unit may well not use the library, nor rubbish services. Many of these activities (buses, library, creche etc) can be easily differentiated and paid for by the user of these services.
2. In respect of the assumption that benefits may accrue to the landowner in proportion to the Capital value, and that 'rates are property tax' I submit that:
 - Certainly for the rural sector there is little relation to capital value of a persons property and the benefits to that property supplied by the Christchurch City Council. Capital value of a property, particularly in this sector, had more to do with the vagaries of the market place, the returned offered by the use of the land and other such factors, certainly not that of the nearest council swimming pool or whatever. Indeed there is little one can see that the City Council does for rural landowners.
 - Rates should not considered to be a property tax. I submit that this assumption should be struck from the LTCCCP. Rates are considered by many ratepayers to be payment for services provided and the ethos of the Council should be based on this, rather than that of a second tier of taxation for local social engineering. This section should read "Rates are a payment for services provided to a property." This still allows for the general assumptions of private vs public good but enshrines the principle that a property (owner) should pay only for what is used by that property and *not* be taxed for the myriad of firecrackers, trams, creches or other things that it does *not* use. The benefits from all services do *not* apply to all ratepayers as the present council assumption states, particularly in the case of rural landowners.

Finally I note that Council considers that 'high value ratepayers can afford to pay more for council services'. I submit that not only is this offensive to the values of this society (that people are considered equal in the eyes of society, and the law) but that it is personally offensive to many ratepayers that their payments for services rendered be targeted on their income as opposed the value and use of those services to that rate payer. Since rates should be a payment for services provided and/or cost incurred the payment for these services should be targeted, and the equal across the properties of the city where the cost of providing such services is roughly equivalent. The concept that a person's water is somehow worth more because their property may be worth more is a very narrow and dangerous view. Water, sewerage, roading are (or should be) a basic precept of a councils very existence as a supporter of the basics of life. These basics of life should not be targeted on a persons ability to pay, rather more simply upon their use of those basics. Why do we not expect our elderly to pay more for buses than our teenagers, since those elderly are most likely more wealthy than the teenager? Because it is neither fair nor reasonable. This intimation, statement, and action by the council is not fair nor reasonable. In concluding this section of my submission I suggest that council should consider other forms of rating that are more equitable from property to property, and that it should reflect more directly the cost of services provided and used by that property, and that services clearly used by individuals (for example buses, pools, libraries, creches and the like) be funded by income from those individuals for many of these things have a very definate greater private good than public.

Summary.

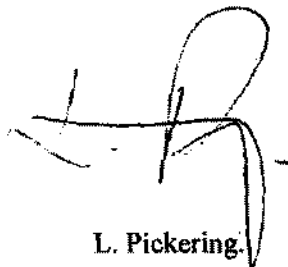
Whilst I have specifically targeted sections of the LTCCP in my submission the salient points and general thrust of this submission are summarized:

- That the ability of council staff to summarily change peoples rating structure and differentiate zones from rates at will should be removed. Particularly with respect to the rural sector zoning should equal rating.
- That council rating sectors should more accurately reflect the cost of those sectors. It is noticeable that for a rural ratepayer the compound effect of rate increases over the past 8 years has increased by 93% with that of the business sector a mere 13% yet the cost to council for rural services in many cases is difficult to calculate since there appears to be none (services). Thus the proposed 75% differential from residential rates should be lowered – I suggest to 50% or less.
- That services provided by council to identifiable individuals or groups should be paid for solely by those people. Targeting of costs is the only fair way to ensure that users of services and facilities do not unduly burden other non-users with the cost of their benefits.
- That rates should be based on the consumption of services by a property or individual and not based merely upon the cost of that property. That the assumption and statement that the owner of a higher-valued property can afford to pay more be struck from the plan, and from the thinking of planners.
- That rates should be considered a payment for services, not a second tier of taxation for social engineering purposes.

Please note that I wish to speak to these submissions, individually.

Thank you,

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Pickering', written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end.

L. Pickering.