

## 7. HOUSING UPDATE

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Corporate Plan Output: Information and Advice	

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on current housing projects/issues.

### 1. HOUSING PROJECTS UPDATE

#### A. Beckenham Housing Project (11 Units)

This is a partnership project with the Colombo Street Baptist Church/Beckenham Housing Trust. The construction is nearing completion, and is expected to be finished by the end of July. Some landscaping/planting will be completed while the tenants take up residence.

The Trust has completed their tenant interview/selection process. Tenants will take up residence in early August. The official opening is planned for 2 September.

The Housing Working Party in conjunction with the Trust had previously considered and agreed on 'Percival Courts' as the name for this complex. The Trust is now asking that the name be changed to 'Lancewood Courts'.

The use of lancewoods as a name and visual identity emerges from a desire to form a connection with the natural environment and provide an identifiable character for the development. Lancewoods would be a predominant feature in the landscaping as well as 'artworks' on the building.

#### B. Cecil Courts (25 Units)

Progress on this 3 storey, 25 unit design/build development is well underway and ahead of schedule. Building work should be completed by December (original completion March 2001), allowing the site works/landscaping to follow early in the new year, earlier than scheduled.

#### C. Hornby Housing Development (Stage 1) (22 Units)

The Council has accepted a contract for the construction of these units, subject to consents being obtained. The Resource Consent has been granted, and minor Building Consent queries are being dealt with. It is anticipated that these Building Consent issues should be resolved within the next 1-2 weeks. The contractor is providing appropriate contract documentation to enable contract documents to be signed. The contractor should have possession of the site by 30 June. Following receipt of the Building Consent a small start work ceremony involving Councillors will take place and site works will commence.

#### **D. Proposed 12 Unit Development – Taramea Street**

A developer has previously approached Council Officers/Housing Working Party with a design/build proposal for a 12 unit public rental development in Taramea Street.

Although a thorough, comprehensive feasibility has not been undertaken the initial costing/price seems favourable. However, there are other issues that make this proposal less attractive.

The Housing Working Party decided not to consider this matter further.

#### **TENANCY ISSUES**

The Housing Manager reports:

*At the beginning of the year an extensive purge of the waiting list was carried out with all applicants written to asking if they wanted their name retained on the waiting list. The total waiting list is now approximately 550.*

*There have been 241 allocations since 10 April 2000, of which 39 were transfers from other units.*

*The vacancy rates for April, May and June to date have been 3.68%, 3.36% and 3.11% respectively, and these have included remodels which tend to increase the vacancy rate due to the time taken to carry out the upgrading work.*

#### **POLICY ISSUES**

There are two significant policy strands that are currently in the process of being woven into the delivery of Council housing; they are:

- (i) Tenancy Policy
- (ii) Tenant Charter

All of the above are still in the developmental phase and all will be brought back through the Housing Working Party/Community Services Committee in due course.

More specifically, we comment in more detail on these issues, as follows:

#### **Tenancy Policy**

A three page Draft Tenancy Policy was developed in 1999 and trialed with the tenanting of Gloucester Courts. The draft comprised an asset threshold and then a points score based on defined needs. Whilst robust, Housing Officers found the draft to be somewhat subjective in terms of interpretation and very clumsy/time consuming to use.

The Policy Directorate are currently setting up a further small officer task force with a view to developing a simplified policy document, able to be used with consistency by the eight Housing Officers.

## **Tenant Charter**

This matter is in a very embryonic stage of its development. Put simply, a Tenant Charter will comprise a number of key housing deliverables that are easily measured and that could reasonably be expected of a City Council delivering “social housing”. The Charter will be “negotiated” with the tenants and will document their reasonable expectations which the Council will need to sign off against as a “level of service”. Quite clearly, housing expectations will need to be delivered in a sustainable manner. When a new Council housing tenant is signed up, they will, along with their Tenancy Agreement, receive a copy of the Tenant Charter which will qualify and quantify for tenants, their housing outcomes. It is likely that the Charter will include (but not be limited to):

- How/how often a Housing Officer will visit them and the purpose of that visit.
- How reactive maintenance will be delivered.
- How scheduled maintenance will be delivered.
- How often and to what specification lawns will be mowed.
- How conflict should/will be resolved.
- How/why/when the “rent” payment will change.
- How/what the Council will provide in terms of “activities”.

Housing New Zealand has expressed an interest in this project with a view to them developing a like Charter.

## **Further Partnership Opportunities**

Council Officers have been discussing with representatives from Nga Maata Waka and the City Mission, the opportunity to enter into some form of partnership to deliver special housing to men/solo fathers in the community (including those released from prison) where there appears to be a need for supported accommodation with life skills training, similar to that provided for women by the YWCA.

The group considering this issue have looked at an existing accommodation facility in the city, which would perhaps meet the needs of such a project, but are now of the view that a properly structured “needs analysis”, probably led/funded by the Council, be undertaken so as to qualify/quantify the “need” for such specialised accommodation resources leading to a feasibility study for a project to deliver on those needs.

Both Nga Maata Waka and the City Mission are keen to make some progress with this issue.

## **Private Sector Involvement in Stages One & Two of the Hornby Project**

With stage one of the Hornby development about to commence in terms of the construction phase, there is a need to progress and agree the parameters and process for selling a number of units from stage one. Indicative costs have been established and a full report will come to the August round of meetings dealing with the various issues and canvassing options.

Similarly with stage two where the Council has agreed in principle to call for private sector partners to invest in the next stage of development.

**Recommendation:** That the information be received and it be recommended to the Community Services Committee:

1. That the Beckenham development be named Lancewood Courts.
2. That the proposed design/build development in Taramea Street be declined.
3. That the Council manage/fund a needs analysis/feasibility study for the special housing needs of men/solo fathers, as outlined in the report.

**Chairman's  
Recommendation:** For discussion.