

Meeting notes for the meeting of the CERA Community Forum
Thursday 29 March 2012, 7.30pm
Christchurch Netball Centre, Hagley Avenue

Present:

Community Forum Members

Withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i)

Michelle Mitchell, General Manager, Community Wellbeing

Diane Turner, General Manager, Strategy Planning and Policy

Jacinda Lean, Manager, Ministerial and Chief Executive Services, CERA

Jane Bryden, Office of the Hon Gerry Brownlee, Minister for Earthquake Recovery (late)

Apologies:

Trevor McIntyre

Chair:

Darren Wright (Acting Chair)

1 Notes of last meeting

Accepted as true and accurate at the time of the meeting.

2 Diane Turner, General Manager, Strategy, Planning and Policy, CERA

2.1 Diane gave a presentation to the forum on the state of housing in Christchurch.

In summary it outlined that DBH, MSD, and CERA have different but collective responsibility for housing and temporary accommodation for both temporarily and permanently displaced people in the greater Christchurch region.

There are a number of policy considerations underway to deal with the issues arising in this area. For additional notes please see appendix 1.

2.2 Issues (and responses) raised as a result of the presentation covered the following concerns:

- Information and statistics on housing and displaced persons are being collated to ensure a high level of understanding and a coordinated set of figures so all departments can base policy and decisions on the same accurate information.

- Information is being gathered by EQC and insurance companies about repairs, lengths of time people need to vacate homes, demand for different housing options, and changes in these trends as the rebuild progresses.
- Government hopes that development of accommodation and support services to address the needs of displaced people and the increased workforce required for the rebuild will be led by the market and the return to the market of the large number of damaged publicly-owned stock.
- There is significant work underway by relevant departments and stakeholders to ensure sufficient information provided to Ministers to ensure they can make informed decisions about whether there needs to be government intervention and if so, in what form.
- Public/private leasing arrangements are being assessed.
- HNZC is carrying out work to progress decisions required on repair and rebuild of state houses.
- At this stage there is no consideration being given to utilising undamaged properties in the red zone as the red zone offer is focused around getting people out of red zone. However, the concept that houses can be relocated from the red zone to another site has been approved by the Minister, and under Option 1 of the Government offer the original owner has the first right of refusal. It is acknowledged that there are some challenges to this and officials are developing advice to the Minister.
- There are a number of sites with existing accommodation under consideration for utilisation as either temporary or permanent accommodation, eg. Burnham Military Camp.

ACTION: A request was made for feedback to the advice that ready available housing such as those at Burnham should be made available for those needing places to go for short term periods while repairs are undertaken on their homes.

- Diane noted that CERA's role is one of advocacy and leadership. Private contractors should be encouraged to continue approaching Burnham and other housing sources about available housing stock for future employees' needs.
- It was proposed that houses that could be liveable with a small amount of work/repair should be a priority. Fletchers are contracted to EQC and this feedback can be passed on to EQC. It was noted that EQC/Fletchers has previously offered to provide the Forum with an update on processes etc and to take advice on board.
- The frustration that red stickered homes in the white zone (500) are preventing people from living in perfectly good homes was a reoccurring issue raised.
- CERA confirmed that what happens to red stickered homes depends on the work being commissioned by CCC from GNS. This is scheduled to be completed and provided to CERA, and CERA has commissioned GEOVirt to provide a 3D mapping of all affected properties. These will collectively enable informed and accurate decisions to be made. The Minister has indicated that these decisions will be made by the end of June 2012.

3 Michelle Mitchell, General Manager, Community Wellbeing, CERA

- 3.1 Michelle added to the information provided by Diane with a focus on the social affects of the housing issues.
- 3.2 In summary the main points:

- Pressure on housing availability means those who found it difficult originally, i.e. those suffering from mental health issues, disenfranchised persons, etc., are further marginalised. This issue has been identified and there is work underway with HNZC, DBH, and the three Councils, to ensure there is support for these people.
- By May, agencies will be in a position to connect those who want to do something (private sector with money, will, and land) with those in need. If there is anything further that can be done by CERA or other agencies, then those gaps and options can be identified also.
- It was agreed individual inquiries about specific properties should be passed to the CCC.

ACTION: A request was made for Jane to follow up on whether the statistics indicating there are only 282 available houses of the Councils 2600 include the non-social housing stock that the Council own, or whether those stats are only representative of their social housing situation.

- Some areas have had their original zoning decision re-looked at, i.e. Parklands, and so what advocacy ability do other areas/people have to get their decision reassessed?
- There are approx 500 requests for rezoning. While there is no identified process to re-assess properties at this stage, advice to the Minister about this subject is being prepared currently.
- A petition from New Brighton group has been recorded, and subsequent requests will be responded to when review criteria have been approved by Cabinet. Priority remains those areas awaiting initial zoning.
- Parklands east, area of 500 properties, Governments agreed to carry out review on this area post December aftershock, and others will be responded to in due course.
- If you disagree with your land zoning decision email CERA, details will be logged and will be added to those already registered for a review.
- In addition to a review process there is a need for an independent advocacy body to help people deal with other issues.
- In terms of the pace of the recovery there has been a detailed report provided to the Minister by CERA outlining the issues relating to pace and what the pinch points are; there are a range of issues which require monitoring.
- In summary it was identified that the pace of recovery is being hindered by a complex environment and a range of issues involving land zoning decisions, TC3 solutions, and the DBH building guidelines. All these issues are interconnected and solutions required before progress can be made. It is acknowledged that as the rebuild does ramp up it is extremely important to ensure there are houses and supporting services for those who will be implementing the rebuild.
- Other factors include the loss of the Central city housing stock, public transport, roading routes.

4 Other Issues

- 4.1 The Draft Central City Plan has been presented to Minister as a draft document and there is a large amount of work going on around this. It is currently a priority for CERA. The Minister is the ultimate decision maker on whether the plan is

approved or not, so we are providing advice on the plans contents and whether it will deliver what is required for a successful recovery of Canterbury.

- 4.2 There is some concern from the Forum about community's role as 'ultimate decision makers' and a feeling that the huge amount of input into original plan by the community should not be ignored.
- 4.3 There is a large amount of frustration with the lack of coordination when dealing with agencies, eg. call centres at the Council, Insurance Companies etc., and a need for people at the forefront of these organisations to improve so that people feel as though they are being listened to and that there is continuity of care throughout the process.
- 4.4 It was noted that the Retirement Commission provides financial advice and information, especially in the red zone, and are looking to extend these services to TC3 areas. They have also highlighted a lack of insurance understanding and information and tools required for this to be improved, and further acknowledged that there is a need for an independent body.

ACTION: An inquiry was made as to whether there is a register available of rental owners and their properties to check whether vacant properties could be fixed and occupied quickly – to be followed up with HNZ/DBH

- 4.5 Housing in the future i.e. Greenfield development, raises the issue that the Christchurch roading plans are old and outdated. Concern was raised about transport and traffic planning as part of the assessments around housing issues. CERA staff noted that there is a Regional framework in terms of Roding and NZT, ECAN and the Councils are working together around this issue.
- 4.6 It was noted that the general feeling of the Forum is that more transparency and more understanding will do more to improve community resilience and reduce stress levels than hurrying things will.
- 4.7 The Forum requested that the settlement date for those selling their red zone homes be extended. There are issues of people being happy to remain living in those homes while they sort out their new home, and TAA being no longer available upon settlement to those with low equity in properties and/or low incomes and/or no savings, who cannot afford to settle without ongoing TAA eligibility. It is suggested that there needs to be greater discretion.

ACTION: Tom to follow up inquiry into the funding available from the Red Cross

- 4.8 An issue was highlighted that once Option 1 is selected there has been some delay in getting a settlement date off CERA causing people to need bridging finance to purchase a new home, and in some cases people are not eligible for bridging finance and so are unable to successfully purchase a new house

ACTION: Cases where an apparent delay in settlement causes challenges to be forwarded to Jane

5 Engineering assessments and other factors causing delay

- 5.1 DBH Guidelines are due to be released at the end of April; there are indications that this will be delayed until May.
- 5.2 It was noted that delays in releasing the building guidelines and a lack of engineering resource, particularly around obtaining appropriate building assessments, is causing enormous stress and delay to the rebuild.
- 5.3 There was a discussion about the current process and theory of engineering assessment. The suggestion was that the current situation is not sustainable and it was agreed that a rethink would require a collective acceptance by the community about acceptable and realistic levels of safety. It was also agreed that this is a discussion for the insurance industry, engineering professionals, policy makers, and perhaps legal professionals but that the community needs the engineering professionals to assist by leading that discussion.
- 5.4 It was agreed that it has to be the community which agrees an accepted level of safety standards, etc., and be comfortable with the trade offs that will be evident in perhaps what would be a lesser standard than is currently enforced being implemented to speed up recovery.

6 Next meeting – 19 April

Administrative support

Fletchers/EQC Issues

The importance of Economic Development being a focus of the recovery

Roger Sutton and the Minister/Associate Minister to attend the next meeting

The Forum would appreciate feedback from Minister on the advice they have provided to him so far and on how he perceives the forums performance/involvement in the recovery to date.

7 Meeting closed 9.30

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Appendix 1

Community Forum Greater Christchurch Housing Market – what we know is happening

CERA is working with the Department of Building and Housing (DBH) to understand what is happening in greater Christchurch's housing market. This includes private rental, home ownership and social housing. DBH is producing a monthly housing market indicators report. There are hard copies available here this evening. This report is on DBH's website - www.dbh.govt.nz under the "Sector Information" tab.

Private rental market: rents are rising in some suburbs – Cashmere, Hoon Hay, Burnside, Riccarton and Avonhead are showing signs of increasing rents. Supply has dropped – TradeMe listings have declined 46% since 1 July 2011. Property managers report strong demand for 1 and 4 bedroom properties.

House prices: increased in 2011 for Christchurch, Selwyn and Waimakariri. Selwyn and Waimakariri have experienced increases in their price to capital value ratio. Selwyn prices rose 7.5% September 2010-January 2012, and Waimakariri rose 11.5% in same time period. Christchurch prices rose approximately 5% between April 2011 and January 2012.

Other indicators: an unseasonably high occupancy rate in motel, hotel and caravan park accommodation since September 2011.

Social Housing: Both HNZC and CCC have damaged properties. HNZC has 5850 damaged out of total Canterbury stock of 6000 (approximately 475 vacant due to damage). HNZC also has another 210 properties in the red zone, most now vacant. CERA is working with HNZC to understand their plans for their greater Christchurch stock. CCC has 382 vacant properties due to damage out of a total of 2600. Demand for social housing - at the Tenants Protection Forum held recently, CCC reported still being able to house high priority applicants quickly. However CERA understands some NGOs are finding it increasingly difficult to find affordable private rental housing for their vulnerable clients (e.g. those exiting mental health care). At this stage, there is some uncertainty whether this difficulty is translating to increased demand for social housing. CERA is working with HNZC to understand what is happening to its wait list in greater Christchurch.

**Greater Christchurch Housing Market –
what we think is going to happen during the rebuild**

CERA is working with DBH, DOL, and Treasury on what is likely to happen to the housing market during the rebuild phase. It is clear there will be increasing pressure on the market to house incoming workers and displaced residents. Based on information received from insurers and project managers it would appear that:

Incoming workforce: Preliminary estimates based on information provided by project management offices were that greater Christchurch needed 24,000 additional construction workers and 12,000 'other' workers. These figures are subject to review.

Some of these workers would be sourced within greater Christchurch but most would need to be found from elsewhere. This additional workforce will equate to more households needing housing. The type of housing required will vary, as some workers will be single, others will be arriving with partners and/or children. It is expected that the growth in demand from workers will increase throughout 2012.

Temporarily displaced residents: many residents will need to move out while their house is being repaired. Based on information from insurers and project managers, most of these households would need accommodation for up to 10 weeks.

Permanently displaced residents: there are 7000 red zone households. CERA's earlier survey of red zone residents suggests at least two thirds wish to remain in greater Christchurch.

Supply: There are greenfield sites under development that can provide up to 6600 sections over the next two years, which will assist address the pressure. We are working very closely with the councils on land supply issues and will be continuing to monitor the situation. Under the CER Act the Minister can use his powers to address RMA related issues, if appropriate/necessary.

There is also some emerging interest from the market in providing temporary accommodation for rebuild workers. Government's position is that worker housing is responsibility of employers. CERA is working with project managers to encourage them to consider workforce housing and to discuss this with their contractors. There is interest among the project managers to ensure their workforce is housed and some discussions taking place between project managers and potential housing providers. CERA is working with the four councils to develop appropriate planning provisions for workers accommodation to facilitate the approval and development of appropriate accommodation.

The Government recently announced a third temporary housing village for residents whose home is uninhabitable. This will be at the Rawhiti Domain.

CERA is concerned about impact of the rebuild phase on social housing.