

Attachment B

Summary of “walk-through” feedback on homelessness policy project.

Purpose

The walk-throughs were held to provide an opportunity for elected members and key informant interviewees to provide informal feedback on the findings from the policy research.

Objectives

The walk-throughs provided an opportunity to learn about:

- the context and trigger for the project
- the nature and scale of homelessness in the Auckland region;
- how homelessness is being addressed in other cities (nationally and internationally)
- current activities to address homelessness in Auckland, and how Auckland Council contributes.

The walk-throughs also provided an opportunity to:

- contribute to the knowledge base with local perspectives on homelessness
- provide feedback on some proposed options for Auckland Council’s position and role in relation to improving, ending and preventing homelessness.

Context

The council’s Environment and Community Committee requested that further policy work be undertaken to determine Auckland Council’s position and role in addressing homelessness, including the use of emergency housing.

The Community and Social Policy Department has since developed policy, identifying a preferred policy position and role for the council. Research to inform this work has culminated in a comprehensive report. The department received a number of requests to meet with local boards and advisory panels to discuss the work. A delay in reporting to the committee provided an opportunity to engage with local board members.

The intention is to conduct more formal, comprehensive engagement with local boards following a decision by the committee.

Scope and methodology

The walk-throughs involved presenting information from the research report on posters around a room. A set of questions prompted attendees to engage in conversations with council officers, and to provide written input.

It is effective in allowing people to:

- Engage with the information at a level and pace they are comfortable with
- Comment on all the matters of interest to them, and elicit responses to key questions
- Comment freely and openly noting the approach allows for a degree of anonymity.

Staff members were available to respond to any queries and provide clarification during walk-throughs.

Walk-throughs were timed to precede or follow one of three local board cluster meetings held on Monday 17 July and Monday 24 July 2017. The locations were central, south and north.

Local board members and people who had participated in the key informant interviews were invited to participate. Some Auckland council staff also attended.

Attendance

All local board members were invited. A count of those who registered their attendance at each of the three walk-throughs is represented in the following table.

Attendees	Central	South	North	Total
Local board members	15	5	4	24
Other stakeholders	8	4	5	17
TOTAL	23	9	9	41

Material and content

Thirteen posters summarising sections of the report were professionally designed to present:

- Context of the policy work
- Definitions of homelessness (and exclusions) and key data sources
- An overview of the content of the homelessness report and methodology for the policy development
- The scope of the report noting the wider housing system determinants are outside the scope of the policy work
- Homelessness in the media

- Statistics and data on priority groups, including information on Māori and Pasifika
- Perceptions of homelessness
- Experiences of homelessness
- Determinants of homelessness – the individual risks and structural failures
- Examples of best practice including common approaches such as the Housing First Model, and case studies from Wellington City Council and Finland
- Current activities in Auckland to address homelessness and gaps in best practice approaches
- The options for a formalised policy position on homelessness and the roles of the council
- Next steps, mapping out an intention to consult more formally with key stakeholders including individual local boards throughout late 2017.

Attendees were welcome to post comments on all posters with specific questions used to prompt responses, including:

- What are you seeing or hearing about in your community?
- How do you feel about homelessness in Auckland?
- What are the most significant changes you'd like to see?
- Do you have any other examples to share?
- What should Auckland Council...
 - Stop doing?
 - Keep doing?
 - Start doing?
 - Do more of?
- Which option do you prefer? Why do you prefer this one?
- Have we missed anything?

Participants were also asked brief process evaluation questions as they left. Comments and feedback were colour coded to distinguish between comments from local board members, staff and key informants.

Analysis

Comments from the three walk-through sessions have been tabulated by either 'local board members' or 'other stakeholders' (staff and key informants). A summary of the feedback has been provided in the committee report and refers to this document for full analysis and reporting.

Summary of feedback:

- The majority of attendees who stated a preferred position and role for the council selected either Option 3 or 4. Most selected Option 4 but noted that funding issues could be prohibitive, and that Option 3 may be more feasible.
- Local board members suggested the following solutions:
 - A national and/or regional strategy based on evidence is needed
 - Partnering with central government needs to be increased, and opportunities to work with financial institutions and businesses should be explored
 - Innovative responses to address housing supply and security of tenure
 - Appropriate support services should be provided or funded.
- Other stakeholders offered similar solutions:
 - A huge evidence base shows Housing First is more successful than other approaches for people experiencing chronic homelessness and that it should be given more support
 - More policy work is needed to address: tenancy sustainment, housing quality including for boarding houses, and rough sleeping in the public realm
 - Coordination is needed across the council departments, and across all the parties in the sector. There were some differences on where coordination is needed most - at either a national, regional or local level.
 - Service delivery and support should be provided for as long as people need it.

Responses to individual questions:

What are you seeing or hearing about in your community?	
<i>Local board members</i>	<p>Local board members identified a range of visible symptoms of homelessness: recent deaths of homeless individuals, people forced to sleep in cars, caravans, and unfit homes; and use of public amenities. Some touched on issues with bad landlords and unaffordable rental properties.</p> <p><i>People parking in caravans in carparks and living in them on an ongoing basis.</i></p> <p><i>People sleeping near schools and public restrooms.</i></p>
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	<p>Other stakeholders responded with three key themes: that coordination is absent, a concentration of long-term homeless with complex needs exists in the city centre, and businesses and communities want to do more to address homelessness.</p> <p><i>Individual programmes and services lack connection.</i></p> <p><i>86 percent have two or more co-existing issues.</i></p> <p><i>Business leaders want to be involved but don't know how.</i></p>

How do you feel about homelessness in Auckland?	
<i>Local board</i>	The overall response to this question was low but indirectly, in responding to other questions, it came through that local board members in particular felt more could be done to address homelessness.
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	Others expressed the need for innovative approaches to increase the housing supply, working more collaboratively to address homelessness, in particular long-term and recurrent homelessness. <i>We have a wicked problem but we have an opportunity to change it now before it gets more complex. Our numbers are relatively small enough that we can solve this problem today.</i>
What are the most significant changes you'd like to see?	
<i>Local board</i>	<i>Nil response</i>
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	<i>Nil response</i>
Do you have any other examples to share?	
<i>Local board</i>	Local board members suggested investigating opportunities for either providing or investing in affordable housing, including rental properties. <i>Housing First seems to have worked well for rough sleepers but for the wider groups there needs to be emphasis on house size as Housing New Zealand is short of five bedrooms and one-two bedroom houses.</i>
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	Others referenced the success of Housing First as an approach.
What should Auckland Council be doing? What should the council stop doing? What should the council keep doing? What should we start or do more of?	
<i>Local board</i>	Local board member suggestions for a future focus for the council included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A greater leadership role to “lead development of a regional strategy to end homelessness” ○ Opportunities to offer pathways out of homelessness to permanent housing “make an investment in local Aucklanders future”.
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	Others called for more support for chronic homelessness and the Housing First approach. Some stakeholders also sought more focus on security and quality of tenure outside of home ownership.
Which option [for the council's policy position and role] do you prefer? Why?	
<i>Local board</i>	Local board members had a high preference for Option 4

	<p>“progressive” with some expressing a preference for Option 3 “responsive” or viewing it as the more feasible of the two options. There was no support for Options 1 and 2.</p> <p><i>Combination of 3 and 4 – funding could be an issue.</i></p> <p><i>Support Option 4 but on a pragmatic perspective, with so many other demands Option 3 may be more realistic.</i></p>
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	<p>Others opted mainly for Option 4 and noted the need for the council to play a role in coordination and integration.</p> <p><i>Be progressive but not necessarily taking the lead – more like taking the lead in coordinating key players.</i></p>
Have we missed anything?	
<i>Local board</i>	Local board members noted a range of other issues of interest including lack of security in the rental market and the impact on senior citizens of low caps on government support for rental payments.
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	Others touched on the need for national leadership as well as the need to work with “ultra-local community initiatives”.
Other comments (those made in addition to the set questions)	
<i>Local board</i>	Various additional comments were provided with a number of local board comments concerned about families with young children.
<i>Other stakeholders</i>	Numerous additional comments were provided from other stakeholders each highlighting the complex nature of addressing all dimensions of homelessness and providing a full range of appropriate support to individuals.

Evaluation

Overall attendees were very positive about the engagement method. They rated the walk-through as either moderately or very useful. Likewise, the majority of attendees felt the walk-through increased awareness and understanding of the issues, and provided an opportunity to share their personal knowledge about homelessness.

Next steps

This report will be provided to those who were invited to the walk-throughs after the committee has made its decisions on the homelessness policy recommendations. Contingent on the decisions, formal engagement with individual local boards and other key stakeholders will be conducted.