

Media Release

1 November 2019

Expressions of interest in Mangawhai community housing open

Kaipara District Council is calling for expressions of interest from community housing providers (CHPs) to take over providing community housing in Mangawhai.

The Council owns 24 community houses in Fagan Place, which Kaipara District Council's General Manager Infrastructure, Jim Sephton, says are in poor condition and no longer provide an appropriate standard of living for tenants.

"If we upgraded the houses, it would be expensive for ratepayers. Many of our tenants rely on New Zealand Superannuation and market rents would be too high for them. Currently the rents are significantly below market rates and don't provide enough income to pay for the maintenance needed," he said.

Although the Ministry of Social Development offers the Income Related Rent Subsidy to top up rents to the market rate, councils are not eligible to access it.

"Community housing providers are eligible for the government's rent subsidy, and they can offer tenants a better service because they specialise in community housing."

Mr Sephton said Council had no fixed ideas yet about what the proposals would look like, but the homes were likely to be rebuilt on the existing site or somewhere else in Mangawhai.

"As they are now, the houses are spread out and don't make the best use of the space."

At a meeting held on 1 November, Mr Sephton reassured tenants that they would not have to move until the new houses were built.

Feedback from the community during public consultation on Long Term Plan 2018-2028 showed support for reviewing Council ownership of the community housing and looking at alternative uses for the land in Fagan Place. Most people thought Council should have little or no role in community housing.

Kaipara District Council follows other councils around the country that have transferred their community housing to CHPs, including Upper Hutt City Council, Horowhenua District Council, Christchurch City Council, Whakatane District Council, and Thames Coromandel District Council.

“Community housing providers have been able to deliver better service and higher quality housing for tenants in other locations, as well as realising value for ratepayers,” Mr Sephton said.

Expressions of interest open on Monday 4 November and close on Friday 20 December. A decision on the next steps is expected by April 2020.

Expressions of interest specifications will be available from Monday 4 November on the ‘Community Housing’ page on www.kaipara.govt.nz

ENDS

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