

7.3 **COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOLMES, AGG,
ROBERT AND ERIC STREET PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES**

MINUTE NO. 79

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MANAGER: Director Communities and Culture – Jan Black

BUDGET

IMPLICATIONS: Possible 2010/2011 shortfall in State Government Office of Housing funding for Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing.

SUMMARY:

COPY

Council currently has four agreements in place with the Office of Housing in relation to three older persons public housing estates and the services provided by Council on these estates.

Since 1962 Council has had in place three agreements with the Office of Housing that provide Council with:

- (a) Sponsorship rights for the Holmes, Agg and Robert Street Public Housing Estates, a process whereby Council can nominate people with links to the area who are eligible for public housing and therefore the waiting list for access to housing for Darebin residents is significantly reduced (ie. from 5 years to approximately 12 months);
- (b) Responsibility for all maintenance and upkeep of garden areas and open spaces on these Estates; and
- (c) Responsibility for the provision of 50% of the General Rates for each Estate per annum.

It is considered that these agreements are out dated and in need of a review that clarifies Council's future role on these Estates and Council's future relationship with the Office of Housing.

In addition to the above, Council also has sponsorship rights for the 42 bed-sitter flats on the Eric Street Estate (for which residents must be 30 years of age or over) which is also in need of review.

A fourth agreement currently in place relates to funding for Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing. This Service Agreement with the Office of Housing is due to expire on 30 June 2010. There is the possibility that the Office of Housing will not renew the funding agreement under its current arrangements. The current agreement is considered to be an anomaly by the Office of Housing (OHO) and not sustainable under their current funding stream. This could result in a \$33,000 shortfall in the 2010/2011 budget for this position.

In light of the uncertainty regarding future funding and a range of issues that relate to the following:

- The degree to which Council can continue to provide the maintenance and upkeep of gardens and open space on the Estates;
- The rates rebate for each of the Estates;
- The nature of Council's sponsorship role and how it has evolved;

- The lack of clarity about the relationship between the OHO and Council's Sponsorship role and responsibility for the work undertaken by Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing;
- The array of agencies currently involved in housing support services in Darebin; and
- The work and resources of the "Our Homes Our Health" partnership

it is considered timely for Council to review its existing and future role in relation to the Council Sponsored Public Housing Estates.

CONSULTATION:

Director Communities and Culture
Coordinator Ageing Communities
Manager Social Inclusion and Diversity
Manager Family, Youth and Community Support
Department of Human Services – Office of Housing

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

- (1) Council Officers undertake a review of Council's current and future role in relation to the Council Sponsored Public Housing Estates in Darebin and concurrently meet with the State Member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson MP, to advocate for ongoing and adequate funding for housing support services for older public housing residents in Darebin.
- (2) A report to Council on the outcomes of the review with options and recommendations for Council's consideration be prepared by no later than the end of May 2010.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. T. McCarthy

SECONDED: Cr. S. Tsitas

THAT:

- (1) Council Officers undertake a review of Council's current and future role in relation to the Council Sponsored Public Housing Estates in Darebin and concurrently meet with the State Member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson MP and Rucker Ward Councillors, to advocate for ongoing and adequate funding for housing support services for older public housing residents in Darebin.
- (2) A report to Council on the outcomes of the review with options and recommendations for Council's consideration be prepared by no later than the end of May 2010.

CARRIED

REPORT

BACKGROUND**Agreements in place between Council and the Office of Housing**

Council currently has four agreements in place with the Office of Housing in relation to three older persons public housing estates and the services provided by Council on these estates.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Housing Commission (now Department of Human Services, Office of Housing) commenced construction of three housing estates in the then City of Northcote, the three estates were developed in:

- Agg Street, Thornbury,
- Roberts Street, Northcote, (currently under re-construction); and
- Holmes Street, Northcote.

In 1995 Council's Manager, Social and Cultural Planning sought advice from the then City Valuer/Property Manager regarding Council's involvement and agreements with the Office of Housing in relation to these properties and was advised as follows:

1. "Holmes Street Flats Agreement"

These 216 units are built on crown land (Allotment 89B) and a Crown Grant to the Housing Commission was issued on 24/2/1970

Pursuant to the Agreement dated 7/11/69 between Council and the Housing Commission, the Housing Commission shall decide eligibility of persons who apply for accommodation but shall also give consideration of all persons suggested by Council. If Council fails to supply any names, the Housing Commission then must give Council notice in writing that after 14 days the Council still fails to supply names, the Commission will proceed to fill vacancies.

The Agreement also states that the Housing Commission should prepare and plant garden areas and open spaces and advise Council upon completion. Following this, the agreement then stipulates that Council shall be responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of garden areas and open spaces.

Finally, Council undertook to assist the Commission in the development, upkeep and maintenance of the land, by paying to the Housing Commission in April each year one half of the General Rates for the preceding year as levied.

2. Roberts Street Flats Agreement

These 47 units are built on land previously owned by the City of Northcote that was transferred to the Housing Commission prior to the units being built.

An agreement dated 8/3/1962 stipulated the transfer of the land to the Housing Commission by the way of a gift.

This relationship is the same as the Agreement for the Holmes Street flats as set out in detail earlier.

3. Agg Street Flats Agreement

These 87 flats are built on land acquired by the Housing Commission prior to the units being built.

An agreement dated 5/10/1965 stipulated that the Housing Commission should take action to become the registered proprietor of part of land to add to adjoining land they already owned.

This agreement is the same as the two other agreements for the Holmes and Roberts Street flats as set out in detail earlier.

In essence what the above means is that since 1962 Council has had in place three agreements with the Office of Housing that provide Council with:

- (a) Sponsorship rights for these Estates, a process whereby Council can nominate people with links to the area who are eligible for public housing and therefore the waiting list for access to housing for Darebin residents is significantly reduced (ie from 5 years to approximately 12 months);

(it should be noted that in addition to sponsorship rights for the above three Older Persons Housing Estates, Council also has sponsorship rights for the 42 bed-sitter flats on the Eric Street Estate, for which residents must be 30 years of age or over)

- (b) Responsibility for all maintenance and upkeep of garden areas and open spaces on these Estates; and
- (c) Responsibility for the provision of 50% of the General Rates for each Estate per annum.

It is considered that these agreements are out dated and in need of a review that clarifies Councils future role on these Estates and Councils future relationship with the Office of Housing.

4. Service Agreement

The fourth agreement currently in place relates to funding for Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing. Council has received funding from Office of Housing (OHO) for its Aged Persons Housing Service since the 1990s under the Public Housing Infrastructure Program (*Facilities Management and Tenant Participation funding streams*). This funding provides Council \$32,556 per annum towards the salary and program costs of the Community Officer - Aged Housing position.

The OHO funding is specifically provided for a tenant liaison service on the Holmes, Agg and Edward Street Estates and for management of the community facilities at Holmes and Agg Streets. A Work Plan for Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing is developed annually between OHO and Council that outlines the objectives and expected outcomes of the funding. Council fully funds the sponsorship component of the role and the case work and community development aspects of the role.

The current Service Agreement with the Office of Housing is due to expire on 30 June 2010. The OHO in quarterly Service Monitoring and Review meetings with Council Officers throughout 2009 have expressed their desire to cease and therefore not renew the funding agreement under its current arrangements. The current agreement is considered to be an anomaly by OHO and not sustainable under their current funding stream.

Council officers have been advised by the North West Department of Health - Aged Care Branch that there is possible future funding via the Older Person's High Rise Support Program for the Holmes Street Estate. However, there are no guarantees that such will be forthcoming and further that if funding is secured it would not be a substitute for the \$32,556 OHO funding received currently by Council. Rather, it would be a whole new funding agreement with new terms and conditions for the Holmes Street Estate only; and not necessarily provided to Council but to the standard auspice agencies for Older Persons High Rise Support program funding such as the Salvation Army, Community Health Centres and Housing Support agencies.

CORE ISSUES

Eric Street Estate

Council has received correspondence over the past 2 years regarding some of the anti-social behaviour taking place at the Eric Street Estate. In 2008 and 2009 the Mayor of the day corresponded and met with the residents of Hope Street to better understand their concerns. A key factor, however, is that the single bed-sitter style of accommodation offered at this estate limits the potential tenant mix that can be achieved at the estate.

Council has been clear this is a matter for State Government given it is a OHO property although Council does play some role in nominating tenants to live at the site through its sponsorship role.

Officers have met with the OHO at their request to discuss options for redeveloping the site. The OHO is prepared to redevelop the units and rebuild more appropriate accommodation which would address many of the issues present in the flats.

To progress this work and prior to proceeding with plans to redevelop the site the OHO requires clarification from Council on the role of Council in sponsorship of tenants.

The need for a Review

In light of the uncertainty regarding future funding and a range of issues that relate to the following:

- The degree to which Council can continue to provide the maintenance and upkeep of gardens and open space on the older persons estates;
- The rates rebate for each of the older persons estates;
- The nature of Council's sponsorship role and how it has evolved on the Holmes and Agg Street Estates in relation to older persons sponsorship; and also the Eric Street Public Housing Estate for younger persons sponsorship;
- The lack of clarity about the relationship between the OHO and Council's Sponsorship role and responsibility for the work undertaken by Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing;
- The array of agencies currently involved in housing support services in Darebin; and
- The work and resources of the "Our Homes Our Health" partnership

it is considered timely for Council to review its existing and future role in relation to the Council Sponsored Public Housing Estates.

The process for the review would be as follows:

- (1) To gather and analyse data on the efficacy of Council's Sponsorship role;

- (2) To seek legal advice on the options for Council regarding revised and/or new agreements with the Office of Housing ;
- (3) To conduct high level discussions with the OHO following legal advice on the agreement options;
- (4) To map the current housing and support roles of agencies and partnerships across the municipality (eg. Home ground, Merri Outreach, OHO, Neighbourhood Houses, Darebin Community Health, Spectrum MRC, Salvation Army and the "Our Homes Our Health" partnership) and examine Council's future housing support/community development role accordingly;
- (5) To provide a report to Council by no later than the end of May 2010 that clearly articulates Council's future role and resource capacity on Public Housing Estates.

Importantly, during the review process, Council Senior Officers will continue to strongly advocate for recurrent resources to ensure that there is adequate and ongoing support for Darebin public housing tenants for whatever the next iteration of Council's role will be.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

Nil.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

In relation to Public Housing in general, the public housing tenant profile is now more commonly representative of pension and benefit dependant single income households. Individuals have high and complex needs that require other types of services to help them maintain stable accommodation. This group of tenants comprise those who are aged, disabled, in poor health and in many cases, experience multiple levels of disadvantage through, for example, mental illness, cognitive deficit, domestic violence and substance/dependency abuse.¹

During the proposed review process Council Senior Officers will advocate strongly with all relevant stakeholders and funding bodies to ensure ongoing and adequate resources are available for housing support services for public housing residents in Darebin.

Other

Nil.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Possible 2010/2011 shortfall in State Government Office of Housing funding for Council's Community Officer - Aged Housing position.

¹ Department of Human Services Evaluation of the Social Housing Advocacy Support Program (SHASP) August 2009

FUTURE ACTIONS

Review of Council's current and future role in relation to the Council Sponsored Public Housing Estates be undertaken.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Memo to Manager, Social and Cultural Planning from City Valuer/Property Manager - Northcote, 20 March, 1995: Details of Council Involvement in M.O.H accommodation in Holmes, Roberts and AGG Streets.