

2021-2031 Long Term Plan Submission

Resident Submission

Niel & Margaret SOWRY
16 Waipuna Street
Blenheim

Storm2flash@gmail.com

Yes, we wish to speak to this submission.

1.0 Introduction:

We are grateful to have this opportunity to submit views on the LongTerm Plan (LTP) and understand we may use this formal submission opportunity to comment on the LTP or any other areas of Council activities of concern to us.

It is the latter we wish to submit on.

2.0 Pensioner Housing Issues:

Submission 1

2.1 New Accommodation without an Elevator:

I commence with quotations from the MDC web site:

1. *"Council provides housing for elderly people to access safe, comfortable housing suitable to their needs".*

2. Positive Ageing Accord Action Plan

The accord records the commitment of its members to achieving the highest possible quality of life for older people in Marlborough.

We are disturbed to read published commentary on the proposed Pensioner Flats to be built in George Street. 6 flats down and 6 flats up.

We read that the build will have provision for an elevator, however that it is not your intention to install this at the time of construction.

We find this a poor and short-term decision from Councillors and we wholeheartedly support and back the views expressed by Cn Andrews who has a great deal of experience and exposure to the day-to-day plight of the senior population in Marlborough.

The media reports and quotes made by both Cn Peters & Deputy Mayor Taylor and Council employee Jamie Lyall, are unthinking flippant and grossly inappropriate. They are a real slap in the face and pockets of our elderly population. An open and public apology should be forthcoming from all three parties.

The “silly” comments made without genuine concern for those who may well consider this their last “home” and the suggestion Council spend over \$3 million of ratepayer’s funds seems inappropriate use of funds. When the final product will not be fit for purpose of those that it is intended to house

Life Mark have advised me that: **The Council plans “are devoid of best practice” to say the least. Not installing the elevator in the building at construction stage deems the building “not fit for purpose”.**

The lack of an elevator restricts not only the resident,

1. it also restricts who is and is not able to visit the resident:
2. anyone using any sort of mobility assistance.
3. emergency services access and exit,

The outcome being the requirement necessitating a resident to move into alternative care when they should not have had to leave their home.

Cn’s Andrews and Sowman must be commended for their supportive approach to the installation of an elevator.

Decision Requested:

1. We ask that Council reverse their decision and follow **“Lifemark advice and process”. and, indeed, make these valuable units “fit for purpose” with the installation of a lift included at the time of construction.**
2. We ask that Cn’s Peters and Taylor issue a public apology in the main 3 media publications for making hurtful, inappropriate, and demeaning comments with respect to our elderly population.
3. Jamie Lyall should be sanctioned for his inappropriate & demeaning comments of our Seniors Citizens and reminded that he is an employee, and it is not his right to be commenting in the media in this way from a purely personal perspective.

Submission 2

2.2 Pensioner Rental Increases:

It is of significant concern that there even exists an **early proposal** to raise rents on Council owned pensioner flats to reflect current “market values”.

As pensioners they are typically on very modest and generally fixed incomes. They are deserving of a “helping hand” in whatever shape and form that may take in their later years.

Our pensioners need to be able to enjoy some of the wonderful things available in their community. After all, most have contributed to the community over many years. To even consider increasing the rental beyond their ability to pay is frightening for them and irresponsible of the council.

If Council is desperate for additional income, prioritising some of their spending should be a priority:

The “feel-good”, “nice to have” things like:

- Gold standard Toilet blocks (of which there are many)
- Extravagant bus shelters that don’t keep the rain out
- and the list goes on and on....

Increases of the magnitude that Council are proposing will cripple pensioners. Increases quoted in the media of \$66pw for a single unit and \$78 for a 2-bedroom unit. These costs, are far more than any small amount of pension increase on the 1st of April each year

We do not believe Council can justify an increase of this magnitude be passed on to pensioners.

***Quote from the Work and Income website: April 1st, 2021,
Pension and other main benefits will rise 3.1% in line with increases in the average wage.***

For Cn Brooks to foolishly compare current “market rates” with rentals charged to Marlborough pensioners is not only inappropriate, harsh, cruel and worrying to those potentially affected but shows a complete lack of understanding of the wider economic drivers at play totally beyond the responsibility of the Council such as:

- Housing availability nationally as well as in Marlborough
- Supply chain constraints on building materials
- Shortage of building grade timbers
- Pressure on rental from trapped seasonal workers employed during harvest
- A national shortage of skilled tradespeople

All these factors have a bearing on both the availability and the rental price nationally but are quite meaningless and irrelevant in setting rental rates for MDC owned pensioner flats.

The sad and uninformed comment shows that Cn Brooks has a considerable misunderstanding of national and international issues directly affecting the portfolio for which she is Chairperson (Housing for Seniors Sub-Committee)

Decision Requested:

1. That from the date of the adoption of 2021-31 LTP and thereafter, rentals for pensioner flats owned by MDC shall only increase in rent by either:
 - a. No more than the percentage increase in Government Superannuation
 - b. No more than the annual increase in the Consumer Price Indexwhichever is the lesser
2. That Councillors consider replacing Cn Brooks as Chairperson of this important Committee and appoint Cn Andrews who is highly respected and closely aligned to all issues affecting the older demographic in Marlborough with Cn Sowman appointed Deputy Chair.
 - a. This request is not made lightly.
3. It is clear to those directly affected by Cn Brooks media comments (and the wider Marlborough community) that Cn Brooks has little compassion for the financial plight of those affected by Council owned pensioner flat rents but, more

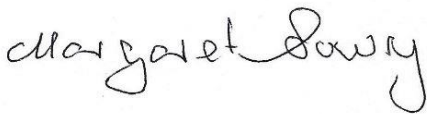
importantly, is in a decision-making position as an elected Member and clearly shows a complete lack of understanding of the Council's own 'Mission Statements'

"Council provides housing for elderly people to access safe, comfortable housing suitable to their needs".

Positive Ageing Accord Action Plan

The accord records the commitment of its members to achieving the highest possible quality of life for older people in Marlborough.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these views and to be heard by Councillors here today.



Margaret & Niel Sowry

On behalf of Residents of Blenheim that have expressed their views on these matters.

CC to: The President
Grey Power Marlborough president@greypowermarlborough.co.nz

Stuart Smith National MP Stuart.Smith@parliament.govt.nz

Minister for Seniors Ayesha.Verrall@parliament.govt.nz

Chloe Ranford
Local democracy reporter
Marlborough Express chloe.ranford@stuff.co.nz

The President
Local Government
Media daniel.webster@lgnz.co.nz

Life Mark Geoff.penrose@lifemark.co.nz

Les Whitehead
Editor, Blenheim Sun les@blenheimsun.co.nz