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Draft Long Term Plan 2015/2025
Auckland Council
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**Submission on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan
2015/2016 by the Auckland District Council of Social
Services**

We would like to make a supplementary oral submission and face to face feedback. Our chair Richard Northey will be the first of the Council "stakeholders" presenting this submission on the 13th of March at 9.15am in the reception lounge at the Town Hall. Please contact our Administrator Angela Maynard at the above contacts to make arrangements for any further feedback opportunities.

We operate throughout the Auckland Isthmus – that is the Waitemata, Albert-Eden, Puketapapa, Whau, Maungakiekie-Tamaki and Orakei Local Boards, and take a city-wide lead on some issues, particularly housing and submissions, rather than cover just one local board area.

We are making a written submission rather than online because it is easier and much more practicable for draft submission texts to be printed and shared around for a committee meeting to discuss, develop and decide on.

The Auckland District Council of Social Services (ADCOSS)

ADCOSS is an umbrella organisation covering the Auckland isthmus area; although our subcommittees like housing and submissions, have a region-wide scope. Membership is made up of representatives from voluntary agencies, community groups,

statutory bodies and interested individuals. This submission was drafted by our Submissions Sub-committee at its meeting on 2nd March and contains all the ideas suggested and approved by our 12 member Executive at its meeting on the 23rd of February.

Our functions include disseminating information on social policy issues, social legislation and policy changes, to our members and to other social and community service providers. We do this by running workshops, seminars and training sessions. We have also taken the lead role in establishing and developing the Inner City Network. We also frequently make submissions to public bodies, the Auckland Council and Parliamentary Committees.

This submission, like others, particularly concentrates on ensuring that the clients of our agencies and, generally, lower income, disadvantaged and alienated people and families can afford and are able to access the requirements of a good life and to participate in work, transport, leisure, family life and decision-making about public issues.

We have an Executive, made up of members elected at our AGM and co-opted throughout the year. This meets monthly to discuss current issues and programmes, and it is to this meeting that representatives from our sub-committees report. We currently have sub-committees on: housing issues, producing submissions, older adults, and disabilities.

We are affiliated to Community Networks Aotearoa, based in Wellington, which works closely with Central Government, the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, the Social Development Partners and ANGOA in the social policy field.

Yes we want to receive the "Stakeholder Update" email.

The Submission made on behalf of ADCOSS is as follows:

Question 1a Yes we do agree with a proposed overall average rates increase of 3.5 percent to 4 per cent each year.

We believe that most Council spending is well directed and enabling a livable city with residents living fulfilled lives. We do not support the proposed reduction in service levels for community services such as libraries and community advisers.

Question 1b We would be prepared to have an average increase of up to 4 percent provided that that increase was used to maintain and develop public transport cycling and walking; community

facilities with affordable access; parks; community development and advisory services; libraries and retaining library opening hours; job creation; waste management; and affordable housing both for senior citizens and for families. We do not agree with proposed cuts in these areas, nor in inappropriate asset sales. We believe that significantly less could be spent on roads.

We also urge urgent representations to the Departments of Internal Affairs and Inland Revenue to make rate rebates apply automatically to those qualifying for them. We also urge Council to promote actively its rates postponement scheme for those temporarily unable to pay their rates or for seniors while they remain in an otherwise unaffordable residence.

Rates, being a tax on the largest component of personal wealth, are basically a fair means of income generation for local government, given that central government raises a much larger amount and the largest component of its revenue, from a tax on income. Unlike income and company tax which can often be largely avoided with the advice of smart lawyers and accountants, rates levied on the real value of a highly visible property cannot. As Thomas Piketty and others have shown, levying a fair tax on property and wealth is essential to slow the rate of increase in inequality and of investment going into property acquisition rather than productive enterprises and employment generation. Provided use is made of entitlements to rates rebates and to rates postponement rating is a relatively fair and equitable form of revenue raising for local government.

Question 2a We support investing more to get the Auckland plan transport network developed.

We strongly support this because there has been a history of under investment in rail, ferries, buses, cycling and walking infrastructure and development. It is vital for a sustainable economy and livable city. Our clients and residents tell us they are often unable, because of inadequate non-car transport provision, to take up and retain jobs, learning opportunities and leisure activities because of inadequate investment in and provision, particularly of public transport. Enhanced public transport is also essential for the quality of life of older adults and people with disabilities, particularly those unable to drive.

Question 2b We strongly prefer the first option of an annual fuel tax provision and an overall rates increase because this would then be fairly paid for by all property owners and drivers in proportion to their overall use of roads rather than have heavier costs imposed on those who have to use the motorway system such as those on the North Shore or in Massey. It also means less money wasted on the implementation and administration costs of collecting tolls and is much less complex. We do not see car users changing their behaviour to clog up suburban streets rather than using motorways as being a major advantage and that both charging systems would discourage car use comparably.

We would be even more strongly in support if all of this additional funding came from an annual fuel tax increase because this is fairer and more affordable for motorists than it would be for some ratepayers. Because petrol prices frequently rise and fall by some tens of cents a litre any fuel tax increase of up to 5 cents a litre should be affordable and appropriate. As set out in the attached think piece on Alternative Transport Funding we would also support funding derived from the unearned increase in value for property owners benefiting from Council projects, such as from city businesses benefiting from the Central rail link, in the form of a betterment levy. Any targeted rates component must be value based rather than a fixed charge for the same reasons as a reduced UAGC.

Question 2c We would urge that the following transport projects be prioritized.

City rail link

Fully integrated fares and timetables

At least 15 new park and ride facilities future proofed for size for growth and with more encouragement for use.

Completion of at least 67% of the cycle network by 2025

More school, workplace and community travel plans

Ferry terminals and upgrades

Rail to the airport.

Light rail/ trams on busy isthmus roads

Question 3 Yes we support the council taking a more active role in the development of Auckland, particularly through enabling more affordable housing. We support the planning, strategic leadership, better utilization of Council land such as building more housing on pensioner housing sites, and partnering with community housing

providers, iwi, central government and developers to achieve this. We also support the proposal for replacing two existing CCOs with a new development agency. This is the only major Council activity for which delivery by a CCO is appropriate and effective.

We also strongly urge the abolition of most or all of the other 5 major CCOs and their incorporation as business units into Auckland Council. Decision-making about Core Council services needs to be transparent, openly debated and democratically determined by elected representatives and their community.

In particular we urge:

The abolition of Auckland Council Investment Limited so that Auckland Council can directly undertake its proper role in strategic direction setting as the sole shareholder of the Ports of Auckland and ensure it is not surprised and sometimes undermined in its strategies, such as for the Waitemata Harbour and Waterfront, by Ports of Auckland.

The incorporation of Auckland Transport as a co-ordinated and co-ordinating Council business unit for public transport and roads. Streetscapes, place-making, footpaths, local signage, street furniture and the rest of road spaces apart from the roads themselves need to be made the responsibility of local boards. Regional Facilities should be incorporated in Council so that we can have a stadium strategy that is sensible and responsive to users. Also to ensure that specialist facilities like the Art Gallery getting the elected member and specialist overview and strategy they need.

Question 4 (a) The fixed portion of rates (UAGC) that everyone pays should be reduced to \$250.

Currently the \$385 UAGC makes the Council's rates imposition particularly regressive, hitting the owners of lower valued properties, who are usually the less well off Aucklanders, much harder proportionately than those who are better off. Both at central and local government level services that are provided for public rather than private benefit have, quite properly, long been charged for by ability to pay rather than by higher proportionate imposts on the less well off. The Auckland City Council always rightly had a much lower UAGC because of the increased use of user pays, uniform charges and cost recovery fees for such costly items as water, rubbish and dog ownership. We have urged a rates cap, automatic rates rebates and rates postponement as much

fairer and better directed relief for those who would otherwise find it hard to pay their rates.

Question 4 (c) We strongly request that, as in the last three years, there be a cap on the annual increase in rates on any residential property that has not been rezoned or improved. We recommend the maximum increase be set at either 15% or 20%. This would not require legislation nor impose excessive burdens on other ratepayers (at a 20% cap only 0.6% more). The fact that projected increases are resulting mainly from revaluations rather than from local government amalgamation makes increase over this level as unsustainable and unaffordable for some ratepayers as did those from amalgamation.

Question 5 No. We do not support reducing business rates from 32.8% to 25.8% of all rates. We agree with using a proportion based approach rather than a ratio which will certainly ensure there is no reduction in the business differential this year which would otherwise substantially reduce most business rates because of the effect of revaluations. The proposed rate of reductions in the proportions of business rates should be halved in future years and any reductions should stop at 30 %. Businesses benefit particularly from rates, particularly from spending on roads, public transport and wastewater because roads and impermeable surfaces are built for the peak demand that business generates.

Businesses' proportion of rates moved to 30% of all rates or to a 2:1 differential is the fairest long-term outcome. Businesses usually deduct the costs of their rates from their company tax and GST payments. For every \$1.70 of rates charged to businesses they can deduct about 70 cents as legitimate business expenses so that overall the \$1.70 is about the equivalent of \$1.00 of rates charged to residents

Question 6b We do generally support the proposals for our local board areas.

Other Long Term Plan feedback.

1. ADCOSS is supportive of intensification around town centres and transport nodes as provided for in the Unitary Plan. However ADCOSS strongly believes that Council and Auckland Transport must provide substantially greater resources for public transport

by increasing resources and must require and ensure much more co-ordinated, integrated, reliable, frequent and affordable public transport on a 24 hour basis with more cross-town connections. We experience Auckland Transport as an organisation to be remote, inaccessible and unresponsive and urge that it be reintegrated into the Auckland Council.

2. ADCOSS believes we need a fully integrated public transport service in terms of zonal fares regardless of mode and integrated timetabling across rail, all bus companies and ferries for this plan to be effective. In order to have the same zonal fare regardless of mode, whether rail, bus or ferry, there will need to be better subsidies for ferries in particular. There needs to be daily ferry services between Onehunga and Waiuku and the progressive introduction of ferry jetties and services to more places including Panmure, St Heliers, and Te Atatu. They, and the existing ferry services, need connecting bus or shuttle services. We support much more additional provision for park and ride facilities, as "kiss and ride" does not work for single people and many families, while taking measures to ensure those parking are actually using public transport. Those who work or seek work outside the CBD, particularly shift work need reliable travel on new routes across town and throughout the night, starting with an additional two hours of later services e.g. the last Sunday route 008 bus to Sylvia Park is at least two hours too early at 5.15pm. We recognise there are efforts to do this in South Auckland but these need to be advanced across the whole region. There should be more effort to use smaller public transport vehicles in non-peak hours. We support Auckland Transport's proposals for the reinstatement of tram or light rail services on major roads in the Auckland isthmus.

3. ADCOSS supports the provisions in the Long Term Plan for the City Rail Link, particularly if it can be brought forward, and the ferry terminal renewals. We are pleased that a bus service to the airport has been initiated. We strongly urge the initiation now of plans and action for a train service to the airport. The complementary provision of safe walking and cycling facilities are also supported. The cycleway programme must be reinstated and rapidly progressed. Street signs must have clearer lettering and be regularly reinstated when damaged or twisted out of alignment.

We find that many footpaths in lower income suburbs where there is a lot of pedestrian and mobility scooter traffic to be in a bad and unsafe state from tilted and worn slabs and overhanging vegetation and urge more resources be put into footpath upgrades and the removal of overhanging and dangerous vegetation. We are concerned that the current percentage of residents satisfied with the quality of their footpaths is 41% against a very reasonable target of not less than 75%. We therefore specifically urge that total capital and operating expenditure on footpaths be increased by at least \$8 million and total spending on roads be reduced by \$20million. Specifically we oppose the Penlink project in Whangaparaoa as a very expensive boost to energy intensive transport. We oppose the Mill Road/ Redoubt Road Project and are against any new arterial roads or motorways as part of an East West link in the Penrose, Riverside and nearby areas.

4. ADCOSS is strongly supportive of Council's Housing Action Plan and asks that it be better resourced and more actively pursued. We are supportive of the provisions drawn from it which are in the Unitary Plan and particularly supportive of measures to introduce inclusionary zoning or a minimum proportion of retained affordable housing, and believes this minimum proportion should rapidly be increased to 15% or 20%. This measure and others are needed to enable lower paid workers and young families to be able to afford to live in Auckland, where they provide an essential element of the economy and of the social and family structures of Auckland.

5. ADCOSS also believes Council should be more actively building or enabling others to be developing affordable and fully accessible housing meeting universal design criteria on its own land including more intensified affordable housing on its existing pensioner housing complexes such as it is doing at Wilsher Village. However, both at Wisler Village and elsewhere in each case the number of affordable and social housing units in each complex must be significantly increased. This needs to be done for lower income older adults, mixed ages and working families on land in pensioner village complexes and other Council owned land. Council should also prioritise, support and partner affordable housing to be provided by iwi and by community housing associations and providers through advice, bonds, guaranteeing loans, and resource and building consents. We

support the residential renewals and housing projects in the draft plan. We also strongly support the initiative taken by the Maungakiekie-Tamaki Local Board to implement a Housing Warrant of Fitness System and urge it be applied by all urban local boards and to all varieties of rental accommodation. We support the Just Rentals programme in the western local boards' area. We support working with the Tamaki Redevelopment Company provided that the opportunity is given for the existing residents and others to continue to live in or return to state, social or affordable housing in the area.

6. We support the renewal and upgrade of pensioner housing and aligning pensioner housing rental policies across the region. The new rental policies for new residents are acceptable but for existing residents Council has provided a social contract that their rentals will remain affordable for their lowest income current residents. Therefore we urge that the maximum rent increase for existing tenants not be \$15 per week as proposed but limited to a maximum \$10 per week increase.

7. ADCOSS strongly supports Council implementing a Living Wage of at least \$19.25 per hour for all its staff over the next three years and extending this to its contractors through its Procurement Policy and its tendering process and policy as contracts come up for re-tendering. ADCOSS supports the rates increase that would be necessary for Auckland Council over three years to ensure all its staff get a wage that they and their families can live on, can afford decent housing and food, their children have a good start in life, and all have the ability to participate in society. Since Ancient Roman times it has been the role of a city to provide both bread and circuses, but the first priority for a Good City must be to make sure that city workers earn enough for the bread to live on.

8. ADCOSS strongly supports Council and Local Board priority actions to increase employment, particularly their Youth Employment Initiatives through the Youth Connections Programme and otherwise. The involvement of local businesses and educational institutions is important in providing work experience, training and sustainable employment to maintain confidence, a work ethic and a livable income.

9. ADCOSS strongly supports the Council's involvement in positive homelessness initiatives.

10. ADCOSS strongly supports the Council's plans to build and upgrade community facilities including libraries and community centres and the services and programmes originating from them. We particularly support the Glen Innes Music and Arts Centre for Youth project. Current increased charges for community groups hiring Council facilities need to be reviewed as there is evidence that some prices are now beyond the resources of older adult and migrant groups in particular. There is a lack up-to-date good sized community halls around Glen Innes and in the southeastern suburbs generally that also needs to be addressed in the long-term plan. More resources should be put into community development programmes as demonstrated by only 43% being satisfied with community development programmes against an appropriate 75% target, which should be retained long-term. The Long term Plan should specify a commitment to the Council's "Thriving Communities" policy document.

11. Further extension, rather than the proposed reduction, of opening hours, for libraries, is important. We strongly urge no library hours reductions. Libraries are central to a civilised and informed society, provide a key community hub and a valuable varied resource and are crucial for personal economic, social, and knowledge development. Well maintained up-to-date quality computers and other equipment is vital and not always currently provided.

Auckland's regional libraries provide essential services for citizens from childhood to old age and for all people irrespective of income. Reading improves vocabulary and supports understanding of complex issues as well as an appreciation of stories. In these times of social media and short text messages it is particularly important to offer for free the possibilities to access books and longer texts. Reading books promotes a number of virtues like perseverance, diligence, patience, and concentration, characteristics needed in both social life and in the job market. For example, it is essential for research, development and education. Therefore reading books and

accessing other library services contribute to the social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the wider community in the long term. ADCOSS is opposed to any reductions in library hours open to the public.

12. ADCOSS is strongly opposed to the proposed cut in resourcing and staffing to support community development. We do support Council's move to community led development but this must also be supported by at least the current level of skilled and committed Council community development staff to be effective for community initiatives.

13. ADCOSS strongly supports the use of parkland and berms for urban food growing, community learning about this, and community gardens. ADCOSS also supports the proposed parks purchases and development in the Annual Plan. We support the Otahuhu Swimming Pool project.

14. ADCOSS does not support the Stadium Strategy. Speedway should not be moved from Western Springs to Mount Smart, which should prioritise athletics, league and soccer, both for training centres and for games which would otherwise tend to be squeezed out by the single event of speedway, as well as for concerts. Eden Park should prioritise Rugby and major league games. The main stadium is too big and the ground too small for test cricket. Western Springs could be the major centre for cricket which provides a natural amphitheatre of the right size for the smaller crowds cricket now draws, as well as continuing to be used for speedway and concerts, which, like the zoo, were at Western Springs before most of the current neighbouring residents arrived. Cricket can also make good use of Colin Maiden Park and North Harbour. North Harbour, being in the middle of a big commercial space, should be used for rugby, soccer, and concerts.

15. ADCOSS strongly supports the Council taking appropriate action in order to declare Auckland both a Child Friendly and an Age Friendly City.

16. ADCOSS supports the implementation of the Waste Management Project, including neighbourhood recycling centres. However we support the right of local boards to retain appropriate regular inorganic collections. We also urge the reinstatement of

education and school waste management and environmental awareness programmes.

17. ADCOSS believes that not enough funding and advice is available to assist private and voluntary agency owners of heritage buildings and structures to protect and restore. We are very pleased at the annual \$10million fund to purchase and restore buildings. What is needed is a fund of similar size to provide grants to owners for restoration and protection and for an adequate amount of advice from staff and contractors for this purpose.

18. ADCOSS is very concerned at an apparently progressive reduction in the proportion voting in local body election and in engagement in consultation and decision-making generally. We urge that measurably improving both voter turnout and the degree of community engagement must be made on the priority KPIs of the new CEO, while recognise the responsibility of elected representatives also. The Annual Plan target of 40% voting is too low and should be increased to 45%. It is also disappointing that only 25% of residents feel they can participate in local board decision-making and the result to be sought should be 50%. Kids Voting is a good initiative and Council should lobby for civics education in educational institutions core curricula and for the introduction of an option of voting online.

Angela Maynard
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Auckland District Council of Social Services