

## **Report from Information evening for Earthquake-prone priority buildings consultation**

The meeting was opened by Cr Iona Pannett with a brief exposition of the consultation and its purpose. Cr Pannett said the process of identifying high traffic and emergency routes, and the subsequent identification of earthquake-prone priority buildings was a result of a law change from central government. She expressed concern for the potential impacts this might have on building owners – particularly those involved in body corporates and apartment owners.

Paul Eagle, MP then spoke. He said the law changes were instituted by the previous government and the current government was carrying on that work. He also recognised the potential impacts on residential building owners and said he was keen to hear ideas about what might help. He said he had talked to Finance Minister Grant Robertson and he had agreed to act as the channel for people with concerns to express them. His email address is [g.robertson@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:g.robertson@ministers.govt.nz)

Mr Eagle also spoke about the possibility of setting up a government funded advisory or issues resolution service and talked about the possibility of Government becoming a lender of last resort which would mean people could come to central government to make a case for getting financial help. He said Council might also want to consider a targeted rate.

There was a question about what a targeted rate is to which Mr Eagle replied it is a special rate which can be levied for a special purpose on either the whole population or just a selected group.

The questioner asked would it be for individuals or groups and how it might help people in body corporates to which Mr Eagle replied it would provide a sum of money and it would be up to the Council to decide how that money would be apportioned.

The questioner then asked when it might happen to which Mr Eagle said that would be up to the Council but there is a process before a rating change can be made.

Geraldine Murphy then spoke. She said she was pleased to hear Mr Eagle's comments that the Government was interested in helping but she said it would be important that people affected by these changes followed up. She said she thought the proposed emergency transport routes seemed sensible but she was concerned about the proposed high traffic routes, particularly as they related to the CBD. She said there seemed to be some very small and some dead-end streets identified and it is unlikely these are actually high traffic routes.

She then went on to say that however they are identified, owners of priority buildings are going to have serious issues meeting the new deadlines. There is a shortage of skilled expertise and the financial burden would likely be too great to manage. There is a difference between commercial owners and residential owners and she felt this

needed to be recognised better. Residential owners can't manage drop dead dates and threats of prosecution and these just add to the pressure. Residential owners need help to meet the deadlines. She added that the Council has a lot of power when it comes to identifying the emergency and high traffic routes and called for those present to make sure they take the opportunity to make a submission and to come and talk to the Council through an oral submission.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Most of these centred on:

- the difficulties with getting engineering and other construction industry advice and resources
- the difficulty in financing remediation work
- the stress tighter deadlines would put on residential owners, particularly retired people on fixed incomes
- the need for Government and/or Council support.

The meeting indicated that hard deadlines and short timeframes would be unfeasible and that residential owners in particular simply weren't able to meet the deadlines.

Cr Pannett responded that the Council was keen to hear of anything people thought would help and that they were aware of the issues and were looking at several options.

People suggested:

- staggering deadlines to give more time and to spread the impact on limited construction industry resources and on people's financial situation
- providing grants and/or cheap loans to support the work needed
- providing tax breaks to help with the financial problems
- assistance to pay additional costs such as rent that come up while the building needs to be unoccupied.

There were also questions about how the high traffic route decisions were made – particularly the blanket approach taken in the CBD and why this would include small and dead-end streets.

Cr Pannett responded that the Council was very willing to hear any feedback on the route decisions and would encourage everyone to provide a submission and to come to the orals meeting and talk directly to the Council.