

I ♥ PORIRUA

How do we achieve strategic leadership for Porirua city?

Who are Councillors responsible to?

Councillors are voted in by ratepayers and are expected to lead the city governance for, and on behalf of the residents. Regardless of being voted in by poorer or well-resourced communities they are expected to serve without favour the interests of all residents along with business and rural groups, two cohorts that do not have significant voting power and because of this are often treated poorly.

I do not blame current Councillors for the outrageous rating levels that we face within Porirua city when compared with similar Local Authorities but believe it is a consequence of many years of Councillors being voted for by residents then allowing the policies of the Executive to rule and ignoring the core interests of those they represent. A classic case of the tail wagging the dog! As a resident of over 40 years I have been told that we have high rates because we are a “NEW” city. This is a total nonsense and there is no factual basis for such an assertion. It is Councillors who set policy and the job of the Executive is to deliver that policy. The current Long-Term Plan will further increase inequality of wealth and income.

There appears little transparency around policy issues and I wonder if Councillors understand their responsibilities about acting fairly. Councils have a legal obligation to charge rates based upon where the benefit falls. This means considering public and private benefit then allocating rates accordingly. To change the allocation for large rural blocks or

for the Hongoeka community (there is a good case here for some property owners) requires a reasoned approach which I have yet to see being exercised. The recent decision to ignore the fact that Porirua’s rural roading costs are 100% allocated to the rural sector is a greater burden than any tinkering that they are proposing within the rural groups mentioned.

A good example of the lack of transparency was seen recently. Mayor Mike Tana was excited about the new adventure development that includes a gondola to the top of Colonial Knob. We, the ratepayers now find out we are underwriting \$4 million of the costs. What was missing was an explanation of the rates the proposal will be paying or if no rates then what rental they will be paying. I hope that Councillors will address this issue quickly.

What should our objective be in setting rates?

Our approach to rates should recognise that the biggest asset of Porirua city is its people. We want them to be able to afford to live here, to prosper and grow, bring up their families and see their children move into meaningful employment. This is about investing in the basic pillars of self-esteem and security. Child care, housing, health care. Every person has hopes and dreams and our policies should not be crushing dreams but creating opportunity.

We should set our rating policy around the interests of those 30% of home owners who have the lowest incomes. In my view these are

those community members that are on “Struggle Street”. The present 4.98% annual increase is higher than expected wage increases, not justified when compared to other similar cities and will disadvantage this cohort of homeowners and in some cases force them to sell their homes. A recent article from the District Health Boards noted that in 2017, 16.7% of people who visited their GP were depressed.

My view is that the rate increase Councillors voted for is directly creating such depression. If we set rates that are affordable and competitive with other cities, then we would also be helping those that are in Housing NZ homes to purchase their own home. I think of these people as those that are “Just About Making It”. I believe that every ratepayer should support a rating policy that works for those on “Struggle Street” and those “Just About Making It” and we will be a better community for doing so.

The current Long-Term Plan is unworthy of our city and with a Council dominated by Labour voters we expect better than to be snuffing out opportunity for those we most want to help. Porirua city will only be great when those that struggle the most and the neediest know that they do so with the respect, empathy and love of those that are better off.

Where is the voice of the Hon. Kris Faafoi regarding Councillors poor choices?

Chris Kirk-Burnnand
Pauatahanui

