

Social and community issues – what matters to our Tauranga City Council Mayoral and Ward Candidates?

SocialLink¹ asked all mayoral and ward candidates five questions from a social and community sector perspective. They could leave out any questions they did not want to respond to.

Matua-Otumoetai General Ward

There are 14 people standing for the Matua-Otumoetai ward. Seven candidates provided the following verbatim unedited answers.

Tanya Bamford-King

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I provide specialist administrative and accounting support to Cambodia Charitable Trust and the local St Vincent du Paul office.

I run a community based performance team Curves O Plenty that produces about 4 theatre based performances a year, and performs at various local and community events
Convene a bi monthly Life Drawing session on behalf of the Tauranga Society of Artists

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

There are so many amazing community organisations in our wider Tauranga Moana community that I find this difficult to answer. They are as diverse as Surf life Saving, Food Banks, Women's Refuge and Men's Shed. And this barely scratches the surface. With such a multitude of varied community organisations in our communities I will not even begin to suggest a single support formulae that will give each group or organisation the best support the Council can give.

The best path the Council can take is to actively keep lines of communication with our various community organisations open. To be prepared to reach out, investigate and provide the best support and resources they are able.

¹ SocialLink is a registered charity managing and based at The Collective in 17th Avenue, a not-for-profit co-working space enabling collaboration. SocialLink is the umbrella peak body for the social and community sector in the Western Bay of Plenty. www.sociallink.org.nz

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

The council has a role to play in supporting our vulnerable community members. However, it's main skills are not direct on the ground support. There are numerous community support groups and organisations that are better placed and qualified not only to identify, but also give appropriate support to our vulnerable community members. The best role Tauranga City Council can play is to provide as much support and resource as possible to the existing outreach groups and organisations to do what they do best.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

Yes. I want to see Tauranga grow into a vibrant, diverse City that celebrates and support ALL of it's community members.

I have found the recent, and past, attacks on the LGBTQAI community completely unfathomable. This is one small thing we can do to not only celebrate our rainbow community members, but to let the members of our community who consider the attacks and "othering" of rainbow humans acceptable, that it is neither acceptable or normal.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

First I need to learn more. I need to approach Ta Ao Maori concepts from a place of limited interaction with Maori community or governance. I see the benefits of understanding and applying diverse ways of thinking to the governance of our communities. Especially if those concept come from our first tangata whenua. My main contribution will be a willingness to pursue a greater understanding and inclusion of Te Ao Maori concepts within Council culture.

Glen Crowther

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I am currently a Trustee of Sustainable BOP Charitable Trust, AA BOP District Councillor for NZ Automobile Association, member of Save The Otumoetai Pool group, and until recently a member of Sydenham Botanic Park Advisory Group

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

So so many. There are an amazing number of community resources, some of which TCC supports and/or harnesses, while others don't seem to have any way of interfacing with council. These resources are both formal and informally structured, or just individuals living in the city who are prepared to contribute.

I meet these people all the time in my work. There are a lot of retired folk in particular who have academic, professional or practical skills that could be utilised by our city - either directly by council or by council better supporting some community groups.

One example is that I used to be involved in a Tauanga Community education network and met so many teachers and people who could offer much for local residents, but were hamstrung by lack of suitable and affordable venues. In that case, TCC could provide the same kinds of community facilities that exist along the eastern coastal suburbs (community centres, libraries, sports clubhouses, etc.) in Tauranga's western suburbs.

Another is the expertise of (often retired) councillors, directors, planners, engineers, educators and other professionals, environmentalists, and other people with practical skillsets, who could contribute to planning a more sustainable city. When SmartGrowth Forums were scrapped in favour of representation from only the economic sector, the skills and wisdom of those volunteer environmental and social advocates were lost. The result is a loss of some important social outcomes from the strategic plan. I would advocate for a reinstatement of community input into those processes.

There are many innovative ways that TCC can help, and just simple things, like offering a free monthly newsletter to the people of Tauranga listing community events, etc.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

A secondary role. Central government needs to step up more, as they have far more access to funding and, most importantly, they have control of the 'inputs' i.e. education, health (including mental health and dental health), disability support, housing, police, oranga tamariki, etc.

That said, a council needs to ensure that its actions and investments don't exacerbate problems and that they are made through a sustainability lens, including looking at long-term, sustainable social outcomes. And TCC needs to do what it can realistically do to support community and charitable organisations that are 'filling the gaps' and directly supporting vulnerable community members.

One of the key issues for council is that it is currently directing an increasingly large proportion of its operating budget into things that don't tend to support our more vulnerable community members.

e.g. A significant chunk of money goes to support a "growth agenda" that delivers expensive housing in sprawling greenfield suburbs, resulting in profits to land developers but not addressing housing affordability or sustainability.

Another example is the tens of \$millions per year of council opex that will be used to support an international exhibition centre, aquatic centre (with proposed higher user fees), art gallery, planned stadium, and so forth - yet there are elders in our city who struggle to pay their rent and have few options now that TCC has got out of elder housing. And locals are now asked for \$20 just to put their boat in the water.

I would support a comprehensive review of council funding and of user fees and charges. I would look at which sectors were funded how much, and whether the economic sector and possibly more elitist parts of the arts & culture sector are getting too much, and the social sector too little - which is what it looks like.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

I'd do what I have said council should always do before making decisions: get the information, present the pros and cons to the public and ask for their feedback, and then make an informed decision.

If people think it's important and there are no downsides, that's cool - I just don't know enough regarding any safety implications. As an Advisor to the BOP Regional Transport Committee, I understand the importance of safety and consistency for all road markings, so would need to be reassured by experts that those are not an issue.

I would also like to understand and discuss with advocates the issue of whether this could result in various groups wanting their own crossings, and what that might mean.

What's more important to me is that we acknowledge diversity in this city by treating all people respectfully, including members of the rainbow community, but also migrants, disabled, youth, elderly, and so forth. Council needs to lead on that.

On a related note, one of saddest things the Commissioners did was to repeatedly make ageist comments against older people, especially men, who had put many hours of voluntary time into initiatives to improve the city – people who have as much right as anyone else to have their say on issues. I strongly believe we should respect the wisdom of our elders, our kaumatua & kuia, and take a strong position against ageism in this city - something that I have seen perpetuated by many in Tauranga, sadly including several otherwise 'woke' organisations.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

I would work with local hapu and, if it is still their wish, encourage reinstating a forum for all local hapu to formally (and informally) meet with council to discuss and debate issues of importance to their whanau. I am concerned that the many words that have been written and stated by TCC in the past few years about engagement and embracing Te Ao Maori have seemingly not addressed some fundamental issues in this city - particularly relating to an unsustainable growth agenda, and some pressing social issues.

I am interested in practical outcomes and (unless persuaded otherwise) I see good engagement with hapu as the appropriate way to help make that happen. Through that forum, I would hope to see improvement made in the areas of growth planning, air quality, water pollution, road and rail transport, cycleways, and housing.

Cam Holden

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I am a founding member and instructor at Seido Karate Tauranga. We are a not for profit club with a focus on community and family.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

One of the Council's primary responsibilities is to foster the development of community spirit. Key to doing this is through participation and engagement. Therefore the council can continue to build on working in partnership with the many local community and cultural groups to make it easier for them to operate / host events etc. The council needs to ensure we have the spaces and places for this to happen.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

We have a publicly funded health system, but the local council has a crucial role in supporting vulnerable groups (e.g. mental health, tackling substance abuse etc).

In that role some suggestions:

- o Facilitate stronger collaboration between health services and community organizations.
- o Ensure we have programs offering support, counseling, and rehabilitation services.
- o Promote awareness through campaigns to educate and engagement with schools

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

Through diversity we get stronger. We build our sense of community through inclusion, engagement and participation. Not the other way round.

Tauranga is a place where we should be able to celebrate our differences. Having lived in the Soho in the heart of London I've seen first hand how the Rainbow Community contributes to the vibrancy of a city in no small way.

Therefore yes I would vote in favour.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

As a councillor, I will support Māori representation in government and promote cultural understanding. I will engage with Māori communities and implementing Te Tiriti principles in

our work. I will support collaborative relationships and Māori-led initiatives. TCC's Te Ao Māori vision, enhances outcomes for our entire community.

Ken Patterson

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I was a voluntary supervisor on the roster at the That for 14 years (retiring last year) supervising junior lawyers and/or law students who took all questions and gave legal advice on Wednesday nights

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Communities show strength by coming together with sporting activities. They have the council facilities to use unfortunately the council is seeking to charge many sports out of existence by exorbitant costs for using Bay venues. In my view the Bay venues group and the Council should reverse the policy of this gross overcharging for use of facilities which the community already owns.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

difficult to answer because you have not specified who other vulnerable people. That said I am in favour of the council offering support to vulnerable people

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

I would vote in favour of the motion. I just think it's a good idea and it demonstrates that there is no animosity or bad feeling against the rainbow community.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

Tenby Powell

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

Over the years I have served in numerous volunteer roles from mentoring SME business owners to serving on the board of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, to our work these past two years in Ukraine with Kiwi K.A.R.E (Kiwi Aid & Refugee Evacuation).

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Tauranga has a strong network of volunteer organisations from feeding the hungry to surf lifesaving, fire and ambulance. Council has historically given active and funding support to a number of bona fide charities and it is important this continues.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

One of our key issues is homelessness. I believe we should consider it entirely unacceptable for people, including children, to be sleeping in cars and reserves (parks) around the city.

We are circa 5500 houses short and we must find a way to effectively collaborate with central govt and the building industry to build affordable homes.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

This is about inclusion. So I am in favour of this and it's been successfully installed in other cities.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

I have a positive track record of working inclusively with Iwi and ensuring they have a voice at the table. It is very important to create a positive environment where we can share our views freely and work collaboratively for the future of Tauranga Moana.

The best example of this is the reparation of the Mauao base track. After languishing for over 4 years, we fixed it in 12 weeks immediately following the 2019 election, at 15 percent of the proposed cost, by working collaboratively with Iwi.

David Tank

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

Lots.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

An occasional foot rub would be good.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

I would prefer that EVERY street crossing is so painted, frankly, the traditional crossing is Soooo last century and kids love rainbows.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

I hate push polling give me SPECIFICS.

David Webb

1. We have been acknowledging all the unpaid/voluntary work and support that happens in our communities during Volunteer Week June 16 – 22nd. What unpaid/voluntary work have you been involved in?

I am a volunteer coach of the Otumoetai hockey club. I have coached and umpired hockey in a volunteer capacity for 20+ years. As well as coaching hockey this week, I have also contributed to the set up for Matariki events the kindergarten of one of my three kids.

2. What community strengths and assets do you see in Tauranga? How do you think the Council can support them?

Tauranga has always had a great community feel - from when it was more of a town than it is today. We are a city of connected villages with various town centre identities, we have

vibrant arts and culture and sporting communities, right through to the bowls clubs and activities at retirement communities.

3. What do you think Council's role should be in supporting vulnerable community members?

Providing resource, celebration and spaces. The resource could be supporting those community members directly or could be educational resource for the rest of the community on marginal, minority or diverse groups. Celebrations are important for example the multicultural festival now into its 25th year, or pride celebrations. Affordable spaces for community groups to organise their own events and group meetings are an important part of Council's role.

4. Following a petition presented to TCC recently, councillors may be asked to vote on the installation of Roadway Art [eg a crossing] celebrating our Rainbow community and wider diversity. Would you vote in favour of the motion? Could you briefly outline why you would vote that way?

My answer is no - but please hear me out!

It is so important to celebrate the Rainbow community and all the diverse communities in our city. Education and awareness lead to understanding, which boosts inclusivity and reduces crime and marginalisation of certain groups. Celebration and events are a big part of that. I am fully supportive of pride week and other initiatives including particular spaces for the rainbow community. It was such a pity to hear about the arson at the youth rainbow centre. Many of my friends and family are LGBTQIA+, including my brother who for a couple of years (when I was living in London) moved cities to Tauranga to live with his boyfriend at the time. I have sung in several national level choirs which did include a relatively high proportion (as compared with the general population) of LGBTQIA+ people.

However, I will not vote for the rainbow road crossing. Traffic safety is based on predictability and consistent rules. Having a unique crossing diminishes safety and certainty for pedestrians, children, the elderly and even drivers who see something unpredictable. There are other ways to celebrate diversity than road markings. How will guide dogs react to the rainbow markings? How will a driver with reduced vision react to it? We don't have enough evidence to confidently ensure the safety of our communities.

5. TCC's Vision and Direction includes a Te Ao Māori approach, 'understanding and applying key Māori concepts to enhance outcomes for our communities, thereby bringing to life the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. As a councillor/mayor how do you see yourself contributing to this?

Brilliant that TCC includes an approach to Te Ao Māori. My understanding of Te Tiriti and its application in day to day life, governance and law continues to grow since my first in depth look at it when I was at law school years ago.

Listening for Tūmanako (the objectives of the community) is core to the approach of most candidates for the council. A priority for me is to take that one step further by

communicating back to the community why we take certain decisions - what was the feedback from the community and the expert evidence that underpins that decision council made. This gives us the best chance of bringing the community along on the journey with how we wish to grow Tauranga while maintaining our duty of care ahurutanga/haumarutanga.

Kaitiakitanga, particularly for the natural environment has to be a key component of how we manage that growth. As a council we need to proactively contact iwi and hapu as we craft our strategy and continue to evolve that over time.