
Minutes of the Waimate District Council
Economic Focus Group Meeting held in the
local Government Centre, Queen Street,
Waimate on 13th July at 6:00pm.



In Attendance

Ms Lynda Ramsay (Senior Policy Analyst)
Ms Carolyn Johns (Community Services Manager)
Ms Jamie Halkett (Administration Assistant)
His Worship the Mayor John Coles
Councillor Michael Balchin
Councillor Peter McIlraith
Andrew Crawford (Ministry of Social Development)
Emma Hamilton (Ministry of Social Development)

Apologies

Councillor Anne Townend
Councillor Jim Rayner
Councillor James Gibson
Waimate Medical Centre
Parkers
Project Waimate (Duncan Walker)
Waimate High School
Waimate Physiotherapy Clinic
Des Scott Electrical
Federated Farmers (Colin Hurst)
McMasters Joinery
James Davis Contracting
Colourprint NZ Ltd

Welcome

The Group was welcomed by His Worship the Mayor John Coles. Introduced the present Councillors attending and apologies were also read having a number of businesses in town wanting to be here but unable as prior engagements Mayor John Coles also commenting on Meridan Energy generating power which would have a great economic benefit for the town. Irrigation in the town would also have a great economic benefit in the District as there is 20,000 to 30,000 hectares of land which is potential economic development for the District.

Carolyn Johns introduced the Staff and Speakers that are from the Ministry of Social Development and explained the format of the evening. The minutes would be available to everyone on line at www.waimate.org.nz and they would also be posted out to attendees.

Focus Group Meetings and how it relates to the LTCCP

Lynda Ramsay gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Focus Group meetings and how it relates to the LTCCP. We want to get to know the members of our Economic focus group in the community and have a chance for issues within their business to be heard.

There are four areas of well being Social, Cultural, Economic and Environment and this meeting is to focus on the Economic well being of the community and the need of getting finding ways to work together to advance community outcomes.

Lynda explained a brief outline of what has happened at the Social and Cultural Focus group and the common concerns between attendees in the Social Focus group were the lack of members and the youth of Waimate and how to keep them in the community. Common Concerns between the Cultural Focus groups there were a number of groups that where interested in the development of a small theatre in Waimate which is needing more discussion which will be held at another meeting.

Introduction of Attendees

Attendees	Concern
Regent Theatre Trust	Keeping the theatre going, it is a great asset to the town even though a small theatre is needed we need to think carefully.
Pro-Ject Waimate	There needs to be support for new businesses by the council. Notes that we need to be aware that other regions are approaching businesses to come to their town.
Lister Home	Lister Home is a community owned trust. The older community are being urged to stay in their homes for as long as possible. Lister Home needs wider resource support.
Federated Farmers	Farming is the most important part of economic growth in the community the council needs to be more proactive with the farmers. Challenge the district to increase economic base this will benefit the whole area. Concerned with the increasing rates and services. The Council needs to encourage irrigation and farming. The concern of increasing costs of building consents and sub-division costs. Concerned re the shortage of truck drivers and skilled rural staff in the summer months. Council have to be supportive for businesses that start up, also look after current businesses e.g. Pea Factory someone needs to see what is happening out there.
Red Cross	Currently supporting civil defence coordinator.
Barry Payne	Support is needed from council in the creation of new businesses in his own business he ended up going to Timaru.
Hook Bush Nursery	Grave concern for small businesses asking for help from the council, getting a shocking response or no response and ending up going to Timaru which were very helpful. Councillors and staff need to change their attitude.

Waimate Pharmacy	The need for incentives for businesses that don't cost. The support from Council is needed when a new business wants to come into the district.
Havoc Butchery	Looking after our young people in the District as they are the future. Interested in what is happening in the area. The Concern in the attitude of the Council. The concept of Slow town foods should be considered in Waimate.
Aoraki Development Trust	We need work together as a region to be able to have any impact on the South Island. North Island and overseas. Having just arrived back from overseas selling South Canterbury as a whole which is more attractive. The economic arms of the three districts have to work more closely together to make a difference. Two more issues that we have to look closely at are our water that farming communities have enough for their needs and people, look after our young people and skilled people and if we remember these two things, people and water.
Enjo, Harvanah made	Concern on Long-term Economic and Environmental growth in the area. We need to work together now and see what happens in the future.
BNZ	Concerned for the barriers facing small businesses. What do they do to get going and being positive about it.
Waimate Knitwear	Concern for getting Signage on and around the main road. The intention to get people into Waimate. The Council needs to stand up to Transit New Zealand.

Presentation by Ministry of Social Development

Andrew Crawford from the Ministry of Social Development gave a power point presentation how the Ministry of Social Development helps the community through organisation implementing projects that will create skills and work opportunities. The presentation included enterprising communities, the application process and the support process that is available when you fill out a grant application. Andrew also explained his role for the Ministry of Social Development.

Presentation by Ministry of Social Development

Emma Hamilton from Ministry of Social Development gave a power point presentation on the industry partnership objectives and their role. There is also the issue of seasonal work, the strategies and to overcome this obstacle and how to help themselves when they are unemployed, which is their choice. Emma is currently working with Eastern Southland and Invercargill in developing a successful industry partnership up-skilling, by placing the meat workers in their off season to other jobs, for example farm jobs instead of going on the unemployment benefit.

An example also given been Aorangi Development Trust was the up-skilling of the transport academy which with the increase in skills there was an outcome of nine jobs that were gained.

Meeting convened at 7:30pm - 8:00pm for networking and Tea Break.

Presentation by Lynda Ramsay

Lynda Ramsay Senior Policy Analyst for the Waimate District Council made a power point presentation on the Recent History of Waimate District Council's involvement in Economic Development. The production of the Economic Development Policy in June 2002 and the creation of the future Economic Development Policy and we should encompass an economic vision for the whole district. The question were put out for ideas for a strategy, how could Council help you in your business? What direction should Council focus on? And questions put forward for the ideas for a policy. What changes to the current policy? What types of Council assistance and funding limits are appropriate?

Break out into Discussion Groups

The Break out of discussion group is for the businesses views and suggestions on the content of the Strategy and Policy to be heard. There were four groups with a scribe in each which took down the ideas and suggestions from the group.

Discussion back from Groups

Discussion was brought back from the groups and the scribe presented these to the entire the Economic Focus Group and they are listed below.

Group One

Ideas for Strategy

- Change the Council's culture
- Make it user friendly
- Council's attitude should be 'what can I do for you'?
- Create a want to be here attitude at the council.
- Embrace that attitudinal change i.e. from the door in and to all that follows.

Ideas for Policy

- Feasibility Study (no cap).
- Capital cost project there is less enthusiasm.
- Up-skilling through Co-ordination.
- Leveraging Funding.
- Rate Holiday for Non competing businesses.
- User Friendly – co-operation and encouragement.
- Tapping into south Canterbury wide initiative but retain our identity.
- Encourage applications and encourage people to shop local.
- Special case provision for high employment proposition.

Continue the feasibility studies, creating security on loans and more transparency. And the building on strengths (identify strengths).

Group two

Ideas for Strategy

- Enhance water supply for the rural sub – division, to increase rating base.
- Slow food town.
- On going tar sealing extension.
- Enhance infrastructure for businesses e.g. roading.

Ideas for Policy

- Council should be a business friendly council.
e.g. 48 hour turn around for the council, an application forum where all relevant staff on an issue can sit around a table with a developer so they can reduce promptly any obstacles to the business.
- Council should not compete with the private sector.

Group Three

Ideas for Policy and Strategy

- Current statistic and forecasted available to look at.
- How can we help attitude
- A Case Manager
- Raise overall income of districts people.
- Zoned land that meets the need of new development
- Helping through regulatory programs ECAN, Transit, and Council.
- Residential infrastructure need to be in place to accommodate growth of town.
- Seasonal labour problems, Strawberry grower
- Immigration strategy for businesses.
- Encourage small business to set up in Waimate.
- Encourage and support the links of "Bush town"
- Bring community together to support progress that could enhance the district in growth and Tourism.
- Providing services to peoples needs letting them get on with their business – Council has the expertise.
- Better to have failed than not to have tried at all.

Group Four

Strategy

Question One: How could the Council help you in your business?

- Issue: there is a perception that the council is not business friendly and needs to move towards supporting business to stay in the region by providing efficient and effective services.
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness within council.
- Change of attitude of the council towards providing business support.
- Council should recognise the impact that they have in business decisions to stay in the district.
- Council needs to be customer focused and should look to provide solutions rather than regulate development.
- Council should take an active role in project development but realise when it may be competing.
- Council needs to provide or at least coordinate the level of expertise required for business development opportunities and/or projects.

Question Two: What direction should the council focus on?

- Council needs to focus initially on being business friendly to existing and establishing businesses.
- Zoning of land is an issue for the better development of the town centre.
- Council could play a key role in land use intensification/diversification but taking an active role in providing topoclimate information. The Crops for Southland model was suggested.
- The topoclimate model may then inform the wider debate on water allocation and develop the case for irrigation as a regional development imperative for the district.
- The council needs to provide a coordinated approach to land use intensification and water allocation.

- Council could take a role in partnership with government agencies to get kids to recognise the opportunities for employment in the region early on.

Solutions

- Council could adopt an internal training scheme to change attitude and be customer focused.
- Council could be more proactive in providing solutions (rather than reactive).
- Create a full-time position for a Business liaison officer to coordinate the council services for new business development opportunities.
- Set service levels or challenges within council e.g. full response within 3 days.

Ideas for Policy

Question One: What changes to the current Policy?

- Group members were not integrally aware on the council economic development policy. so the debate around these issues was minimal.
- Policy was too much focused on what the council wants at a high level and possible funding sources.
- Building business capability was mentioned as a key point. Role for ADT to provide greater services for the district. Not a council role.
- The role of Project Waimate was not well appreciated or understood by the group.

Question Two: What types of council assistance and funding limits are appropriate?

- Council should not necessarily set funding limits.
- Council should not fund business development in competition with existing businesses.
- Council should have the expertise to assess opportunities for economic development based on the merit of the project.

Solution

- Create a full-time position for an economic development manager to;
 - Set the Economic Development Strategy for the district.
 - Work with the community to set the Economic Development priorities for the district.
 - Align the Council's Economic Development Policy to the priorities.
 - Develop the groups to drive the set priorities.
 - Seek funding from Government agencies to develop projects.
 - Coordinate the provision of business capability training.
 - Manage investment opportunities with council etc.

Carolyn Johns wrapped up the evening by thanking everyone for attending and explained that there is a lot to work to be done. Expressing the importance of the Economic strategy and how it should define the district and define what Waimate provides and what we are good at. We would also like to thank you for your input on tonight's discussion.

Our Focus Group meetings are to be held three to four times a year and the next proposed meeting will be in October this should give us enough time to collate and research. If you have any questions or just want to follow through don't hesitate to contact us at anytime.

Spread the word between businesses and encourage other to participate.

Meeting Closed at 9:40