

KEY DIRECTIONS OF COUNCIL

'Business As Usual'

The content of this LTCCP reflects the key directions of Council for the next 10 years.

A strong focus on operational efficiency and financial prudence has been a key element of the District's past success, with much emphasis placed on the traditional core infrastructural services of Council and the delivery of those services in a highly cost-effective manner that has been believed to meet the expectations of our residents.

The importance and appropriateness of existing core services such as roads, water supply, drainage, refuse, reserves and facilities has been confirmed through the results of a District wide survey of ratepayers conducted in 2008. This survey presented a range of options for differing levels of service (both higher and lower) for these activities, accompanied by an estimate of the associated effect on the level of rates, and invited ratepayers to select which option they preferred.

The survey results (presented in Appendix 1) strongly indicated that the existing level of service was the preferred option of ratepayers for every activity surveyed. Whilst this survey did not extend to the full range of activities undertaken by Council, the results are interpreted as broad support for a general policy of maintaining the status quo in respect of the existing extent and level of traditional core Council services.

This, together with the low levels of growth projected to occur in District, has resulted in the LTCCP being largely based on a conservative 'business as usual' model, with relatively few changes to existing activities or policies. The next few years are not considered an appropriate time for ambitious new activities or costly new non-essential projects.

Areas of Focus Beyond 'Business as Usual'

Whilst maintenance of existing traditional core infrastructural services in a highly efficient and cost-effective manner is therefore viewed as the highest priority, Council recognises that significant changes have occurred in the social, economic and physical environments, and in the public's perceptions of associated issues, and that these changes need to be reflected in the strategic direction of Council.

Council discussion in relation to its role and direction is ongoing, but there was a more formal exercise conducted in 2008 to ensure that Council had undertaken comprehensive consideration of these matters, in a manner considered consistent with what the Office of the Auditor General has referred to as 'The Right Debate' in the context of 2009 LTCCPs.

This direction setting exercise concluded with a formal workshop in November 2008, during which a very broad discussion was conducted on the characteristics of the District and Council, future threats and opportunities, vision development and potential strategies towards achieving that vision.

A key outcome of this workshop was development of six key objective statements for Council in respect of its future management of the District, in addition to the paramount objective of maintaining efficient and cost-effective core services as previously discussed. These six objective statements, in no particular order are as follows (objective statement in italics with associated commentary following):

Facilitate Managed Growth

Implement a planning framework that enables growth within the District without significant detriment to the District's character.

This objective is based on a belief that economic and population growth within the District is essential if the core services available to the District - including both those services provided by Council and by other agencies - are to be maintained or improved. A failure to do so is likely to compound the existing slow decline of population in the District, as people chose to move to other locations where these core services are more readily or affordably available.

Such stimulation of growth does however need to take account of the District's environment and character, to the extent that this is possible without creating barriers that will compromise the social and economic viability of communities.

Responses to this objective will be provided through the Planning and Development activity of Council, with the current review of the District Plan providing the primary opportunity for establishing an appropriate planning framework.

Enhance Branding and Promotion of the District

Develop and implement, in conjunction with other stakeholders, appropriate strategies to more effectively promote the District as a place in which to live and work and a tourism destination.

This objective was developed in response to a belief that the environment, history and culture of the District and King Country region provide significant further opportunities for tourism that are not being fully realised due to inadequate and fragmented promotion efforts, and that this lack of effective promotion also has negative effect on the ability of the District to attract new residents and businesses which will support growth.

Responses to this objective will be provided through the District Promotion, Development and Tourism activity of Council.

Develop Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

Investigate, and where appropriate support, development of outdoor recreational activities that will effectively integrate with the environment and character of the District.

This objective was developed in response to a belief that the District has strengths in respect of its natural resources and the accessibility of those resources that could be more effectively utilised to provide outdoor recreational opportunities in both the urban and rural areas.

That would contribute positively to the quality of life of residents, support tourism related activities, and make the District more marketable as a place in which to live.

It is envisaged that responses to this objective would be primarily provided through the Parks and Reserves and Roving activities of Council.

Promote Business Opportunities

Continue to promote the District as a good place in which to do business, both directly and indirectly through business friendly policies.

This objective was developed based on recognition that a strong and growing business community is a fundamental requirement for the continued wellbeing of the District. Agriculture and supporting services provide the District's economic backbone, and a broad range of other industrial and commercial activities is also desirable to provide a diversified and resilient local economy.

Council believes that it should adopt a 'business friendly' approach that will support existing enterprises and make the District an attractive location for new business developments.

Responses to this objective will be delivered through both Council's District Promotion, Development and Tourism activity and through adoption of business enabling attitudes and policy development in other relevant Council activities.

Adopt a 'User Pays' approach to lifestyle choices

Where communities make choices in respect of lifestyle, social or environmental factors, any additional costs to Council associated with these choices should be paid by those communities.

This objective was developed in response to a belief that where particular communities make choices that extend beyond normal Council practice for lifestyle, social or environmental reasons, it is not reasonable for any additional costs associated with those choices (relative to normal Council practice) to be passed on to the District as a whole, and that the community making such choices should instead be responsible for those costs, providing local accountability.

Responses to this objective will be delivered through the Democratic Process activity of Council.

Encourage broader community awareness and ownership in respect of environmental issues

Encourage the broadest possible awareness of environmental issues, with the intention that the expressed views of communities do not only reflect the views of a small and potentially non-representative minority.

This objective was developed in response to a belief that there have in recent times been cases where significant decisions in relation to environmental matters, with broad implications for particular communities, have been made with the broader community either

being unaware of and/or failing to effectively express views on the relevant issues.

Council considers it is important that members of communities in the District effectively utilise their rights to be involved in decision making on environmental matters, particularly where decisions on those matters could contribute to undermining the social and economic viability of their communities.

There is considered to be a linkage between this objective and the previous objective, in that communities also need to be made aware that environmental choices often have significant associated direct and/or indirect costs for that community. Where an environmental decision is made within a community, any resultant additional direct costs to Council may be recovered from the ratepayers of that community, regardless of the extent to which those ratepayers were involved in making that decision.

Responses to this objective will be delivered through the Democratic Process activity of Council, and will be largely educational.

These key objective statements represent the particular views of Council on the most practical opportunities by which it can make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of the District after continuing maintenance of effective core services.

How Objective Statements relate to Community Outcomes

In identifying these opportunities consideration has been given to the desires of the community as expressed through the Community Outcomes process, and which are described in a previous section. Whilst the primary purpose of these Key Areas of Focus is not necessarily to directly facilitate such outcomes, it is believed that none of the stated objectives is fundamentally contrary to the outcomes, and that all have broad potential to make positive contributions towards the achievement of a range of Community Outcomes.

Issues of affordability have also played a role in shaping these objective statements, and it is believed that there are many actions

with relatively low costs that will facilitate achievement of these objectives.

Have Your Say on Council's Directions

Council invites the public to comment on these proposed objective statements, and other aspects of the future direction of Council. The LTCCP should reflect the desires of the community, and feedback is essential if this is to occur.

Opinions are therefore welcomed on both the appropriateness of the identified areas of focus ('business as usual' plus the six proposed objective statements), and on the particular actions that could generate positive results in these focus areas.

For example you may be particularly supportive of the 'Develop Outdoor Recreational Opportunities' objective, and have ideas on specific new projects or services that would support this. If so, please let us know through the submission process associated with the plan. Alternatively you may disagree with the proposed focus areas, and wish to offer suggestions on alternative directions. Once again Council would welcome such feedback.