

Questionnaire for Invercargill City Council Mayoral and Councillor Candidates

Chambers of Commerce Southland believe the calibre of the local government candidates is an important issue in the coming local elections. We set to identify candidates who support and acknowledge various key actions and policies which will enhance Invercargill as a good city to do business in and which is run effectively and efficiently from a commercial perspective. Responses to the following questions will be used by the Chamber to represent our members' interests.

1. Please outline your vision for Invercargill city in 2011?
To have a safe, vibrant and exciting city to live, work and enjoy.

2. Name three key issues that you support and will campaign on?
-Critical Mass. The City needs to maintain and increase its population through active promotional campaigns. Creating jobs and employment opportunities, particularly in the skills areas we are lacking. Provide suitably zoned land and business friendly regulatory environment.

3. Please outline the specific initiatives you will support to ensure that Invercargill has a business friendly environment.
Provision of suitably zoned land.

Continually up-date our District Plan to ensure it makes it easier to do business where there is no detrimental effect on the environment.
Ensure regulatory staff remains helpful and assist people achieve their goals and that ongoing training is continued...

4. Name five key priorities you see for infrastructural investment in the city over the next five-years.
 1. Suitably zoned Industrial land.
 2. Water and sewerage and roading infrastructure needs to keep pace with development.
 3. Airport
 4. Seaport.
 5. Adequate supply and reliable electricity.

5. Do you support the use of public private partnerships when council is looking at building, operating or maintaining infrastructure?

Absolutely, as long as a “win win” for both parties. E.g. Kings Bend

6. What are your views on the council’s use of debt to fund projects? Do you think the council has an appropriate level of debt?

Council’s debt is a little light and needs to reflect a balance between having good infrastructure in place to move the City forward and for today’s and future ratepayers paying their fair share for those improvements.

7. What is your position on whether Council should free up more land for residential housing?

Yes, more land should be available in the areas where people want to live but the full cost should fall on those residents and developers.

8. What is your position on climate change and carbon neutrality?

I support the evidence now available about climate change in that the world needs to pro-active in working towards reducing carbons. The rider being that as a Country N.Z. needs to be cautious about how far to go and how much to spend. I support an incentive approach rather than punitive measures.

9. Do you think Councillors should be paid in proportion to the number of meetings they attend, or a through a fixed annual fee, or in some other way?

I.C.C. pays Councillors a fixed fee with no meeting fees. (except resource consent hearings) This seems to work well.

10. What are your views on Council ownership of non-core assets including trading enterprises of Council i.e. those assets that are not essential to run local government? What do you define as core or strategic assets and why?

I believe Council should retain electricity, forestry and the Airport as vital strategic assets with the proviso that they are run commercially and benefit ratepayers in the short and long-term. I am not convinced owning or part owning contracting companies has any real benefit to Council.

11. Do you agree that trading enterprises should be governed by a commercial board of directors and such businesses should be run on a commercial business basis?

Yes No

Comment

12. Do you consider there is a further need for local government reform? If so, what are your reasons?

There is room to consider fewer Council's in Southland. While a lot of progress has been made with shared services and working together on landfills, venture and computer services, I believe the time will come for 1 or 2 Unitary authorities.

13. What are your views on combining local authority service delivery, and amalgamations with neighbouring authorities?

Yes, combined services are already in place and working. Amalgamations will come in the future.

14. Name three actions that you will take to ensure Invercargill city delivers better service and value to rate payers and residents.

Independent reviews of our asset management plans and service delivery functions to ascertain streamlining or efficiency gains.
Up-date and more user-friendly District Plan.
More public consultation with user groups and public.

15. Would you support a rates target so that council's rates income does not exceed the combined rate of inflation and population growth per year?

Great in theory but can't work in practice. Council has 7 year contract in place for bus services at a fixed rate but adjusted by a national inflation figure. This has meant increases 3 times higher than the official inflation figure because it had an oil element tagged to it. Roading is big cost to Council and was affected in a similar way.

16. Do you support the use of differential rates whereby business rate payers pay more than residential rate payers per dollar of rateable land? If you do, how would you justify this?

Yes. Differential rates may be phased out but targeted rates should be levied to ensure fairness across the board. Industry and businesses have an impact on services like roading and sewerage disposal costs.

17. What are your views on council use of fees and charges?

Most fees and charges are appropriate and fair but must remain so to be competitive.

18. Do you think the community should pay for its own water on a user pays basis?

Yes No

Comment

No, too costly and not being abused at present.

19. Please identify three courses of action you would want to promote to ensure and vibrant C.B.D

Greater Police presence in inner city.
Further incentives to building owners to upgrade buildings.
More inner city events, street markets etc.

20. List five keys issues that you consider need addressing by the Council in the next three-years

1. Zoning appropriate industrial land
2. Improvements to water and sewerage.
3. Increasing population
4. Up-dating District Plan
5. Improving generation capacity to attract industry and jobs.

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