

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 election. 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 question will be used by the Chamber to represent our member's interests.

1. Please outline your vision for Invercargill city in 2011?
That Invercargill has a vibrant and supportive community and is widely recognised as being a desirable place to live with a population sufficient to support the services and facilities that enhance quality of life.
2. Name three key issues that you support and will campaign on?
 - **Ensuring that rates are equitable across ratepayers and that abusers pay.**
 - **That the council controlled organisations are run efficiently.**
 - **That council and councillors are more open and transparent**
3. Please outline the specific initiatives you will support to ensure that Invercargill has a business friendly environment.
 - **Reduce inconsistencies across the local councils by amalgamating the service delivery under a single unified administration.**
 - **A quarterly meeting with the Chamber of Commerce aligning with the meetings currently held with Vibrant Invercargill.**
 - **Continue and enhance the ability of Venture Southland to leverage support to business.**
4. Name five key priorities you see for infrastructural investment in the city over the next five-years.
 - **Bluff Water Reticulation.**
 - **Invercargill water mains upgrades.**
 - **Branxholme Pipeline Upgrade**
 - **Tiwai Bridge upgrade.**
 - **Clifton Sewerage Plant upgrade.**
5. Do you support the use of public private partnerships when council is looking at building, operating or maintaining infrastructure?
Absolutely, the concept of Public Private Partnership is not new we have some very good examples in Southland such as the partnership between Real Journeys, Venture Southland, Central Government and the local trusts with the Living Fiordland project in Te Anau. They do require a common will and mutual trust to succeed.

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?

No I do not believe that Council has an appropriate level of debt and this was confirmed in the recent review of local government. Council having a debt ratio as low as it is sees today's ratepayers taking a disproportionate level of exposure to intergenerational projects.

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

I believe council does have a role in shaping the city and I have no problems at all with both land banking to facilitate controlled future development and land disposal to see that strategy implemented, however the benefit is in the quality of the strategy.

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

I believe climate change is a reality and that it is a result of human action. With that belief it is not only our duty but our responsibility to do all we can to correct the matter. For example in the early 1990's my company put a proposition to the Invercargill City Council to use Heat Pumps to heat Splash Palace pool water, this was ruled out of hand as coal was so much cheaper and we have been belching CO2 ever since, Bluff pool and the new learners pool are using heat pumps with very significant energy savings coming from them and no CO2. We can make a difference without any negative financial implications as long as we take the long term view not the short one.

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?

Neither, I believe councillors should be compensated for their loss of earnings only. Council candidates should not be encouraged to seek election for financial gain nor should they be discouraged from standing due to success seeing them take a loss in earnings.

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 am in favour of community ownership of some assets where the benefits clearly benefit the community, I am not convinced the Council should be involved in Forestry for example yet I have no issues with owning the local power network and the airport. I also take into account the huge community support we have in Southland for community owned assets in other organisations such as the Community Trust of Southland, the Invercargill Licensing Trust and the Southland Building Society

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

Absolutely while acknowledging that my view of commercial is on a quadruple

bottom line basis, not a simplistic financial one.

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

Yes, I believe Southland still has too much local government, how can Southland with a population of under 100,000 people justify 3 territorial local authorities and a regional council, I am firmly in the "One Southland Camp".

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

Totally agree, we have done it with Tourism and Economic Development under Venture Southland, we have done it with Arts through the Regional Heritage Committee, it is an absolute nonsense to not be doing this in areas such as Building Inspectors, Libraries etc the list goes on and on.

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

- **Amalgamation of the service delivery provisions of the 3 Councils would reduce inconsistencies which are currently frustrating the building sector.**
- **Ensure there is no cross subsidisation business to business or ratepayer to business.**
- **Remove the current "cost plus" mentality from council and management.**

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

Yes and I believe this can be achieved by changing the debt ratio and using debt as a tool to level out the consequences of fluctuating costs, for example this year's high rate increase was on the back of the global oil index, clear evidence was presented showing over time costs level out with the CPI.

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?

No, I am more in favour of targeted rates such as we have in the CBD area and mechanisms such as trade waste as means to ensure equity both between businesses and with the residential ratepayer.

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

Fees should be in line with the cost of the service although robust enough to ensure high users and abusers carry the additional fees not the average user.

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

No, there are some things that are a community necessity and user pays has no place, even if I did the cost of metering and monitoring would be prohibitive. The only rationale I would consider would be as a conservation tool.

19. please identify three courses of action you would want to promote to ensure and vibrant C.B.D
- **Make sure our district plan has clear strategic objectives.**
 - **Continue the relationship with Vibrant Invercargill as the representative body for the CBD.**
 - **Increased commitment to inner city cleanliness and safety by council, business and the community.**
20. List five keys issues that you consider need addressing by the Council in the next three-years
- **Becoming more open with its stakeholders.**
 - **Amalgamation of services across the 3 councils.**
 - **Increasing return on equity from the trading companies.**
 - **Developing a more coherent and strategic district plan for the development of the city residentially and commercially.**
 - **Advocating for more assistance around the Tiwai Bridge upgrade.**

Name of person completing questionnaire: Wayne Harpur

Date: 24th September 2007

E-mail contact: wayne@wayneharpur.co.nz