

# 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?  
Invercargill 2011 I would like a city where residents feel at peace within their environment due to having a council which operates in a open communicative manner, and in governance operated with accountably, transparency and with honesty and integrity. Where the cost of rates, council charges and electricity was not burdensome. A city where residents could look forward to planning a future for themselves and their families.

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2. Name three key issues that you support and will campaign on?  
1) Accountability and Transparency

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2)Open council with Community communication

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3) Responsible Progress/council stick to its core function

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3. Please outline the specific initiatives you will support to ensure that Invercargill has a business friendly environment.  
I believe the city would have a business friendly environment if council changed its present priorities of getting into such activities as land speculation instead concentrate on a programme that would end up reducing rate demand or via EIL our power accounts. I believe if business did not have to pay excessively in rate demands or for their power they could better afford to meet their other costs and with this, plan for a future in their business.

I will support work for debt reduction thus assuring rate demands are lowered, and to lobby for closure of activities that run at a considerable loss such as the Bluff civic centre with its subsidized Kiwi Bank and Lotto shop and suggest the centre building be sold.

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I would support a re-look at other City non core assets i.e. our forestry, the Cook Adam building, Awarua land which could be sold to reduce debt

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or transferred into other better projects such as a rejuvenation plan for developing suburbs such as Appleby

Accountability and transparency within council by insisting that the city finances are audited annually as per New Zealand's statutory requirement

I would expect council officers to at all times be helpful and supporting to the business community where problems develop and where the city could assist in their remedy

I would work towards council being reasonable in its other charges such as tipping charges which are a burden to both business and community, and also where differential rates are an obviously unfair burden to business.

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4. Name five key priorities you see for infrastructural investment in the city over the next five-years.

1) Parks and reserves ...continuation of walkways

2) Library development to be completed

3) Making sure that city infrastructure such as drainage and sewage is capable of handling all future output

4) Museum and art gallery redevelopment if shown to be necessary

5) I would be open to public submissions in annual plan as to what the community considers is a priority

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

I would need to be persuaded it was in the best interest of the community.

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Re public debate over partnership deal in shops to be built between Esk and Tay St in the 90s Generally this debate showed the community was opposed to such partnership I would feel obliged to take this into consideration

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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?

I can see this view could be favourable but would only support this if, via local government conference, Government was lobbied to instruct the Reserve Bank to provide low interest loans to fund local bodies' essential services that need development

I have concern about borrowing practices at the moment: most lending at present is done with overseas investors and sometimes / often at a much higher interest rate than necessary which places an un-acceptable burden on rate payers.

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Our city debt is far too high and to me un-acceptably so : it needs to be reduced

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

NO council should not free up more land for residential housing.

They should instead encourage developers to develop on the plentiful residential land already available in city. There is plenty of land in South Invercargill needing developing into residential housing. I would oppose our City Council encouraging more subdivisions such as is happening on Otermika Rd, especially when we have vacant land available within the present city boundaries

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

I am very aware of the Climate change debate and believe we the council need to lead the way to help protect the fall out of this problem in the future.

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1) We need to operate our various administrations and LATEs by working to save energy. Saving with the use of electricity and travelling by making sure only necessary air trips are taken which use up valuable carbon credits

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2) We need to gradually replace our council vehicles with ones that are more efficient in fuel.

3 ) In consents for heating etc we need to be aware of NZ guide lines for heating of homes.

4) Council could assist those on low incomes with low interest loans who have in their homes very inefficient heating such as open fireplaces, to be replaced with more efficient environmentally friendly heating

5) Council could offer an encouragement for landlords to also look at providing tenants with environmentally efficient suitable heating

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6) Council should encourage all new homes built to include solar heating for their hot water heating, making developers aware of the government assistance available to assure such outcomes

7) Continue with the city infrastructure in the storm drainage programme which will help to assist any problems in the future when we experience another deluge of rain such as we had in 1984

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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?

Not sure on this: I would be happy for a public debate on the issue, where I can listen to all points of views and then decide at the end, according to the wishes of the majority of the public.

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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 totally opposed to council ownership of non-core assets, to me it is dabbling in the work expected of private enterprise. I would be very much in favour of the sale of these assets we have at present that are questionable as to why we own them at all,.

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I define Bond Contracts, Airport and EIL as strategic assets plus the infrastructure assets such as parks and reserves library, museum and art galleries our cemetery/ crematorium and sewage treatment.

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These assets are important as they have a pivotal role within our

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community lives and I believe it is essential for them to be in public ownership with public control

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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  NO

Comment- I have said no as I am very unhappy at the way the City LATES at present are being run supposedly on a commercial business basis. According to Dean Johnstone our city Director of finance on Cue TV September 5<sup>th</sup> the problem with our audit is with these companies. I would be in favour of governance by a commercial board of Directors if HOLDCO was disbanded and our LATES be expected to report to a full open council meeting every three months as to their failings and successes, along with what progress they have made in their corporate intentions and the expectations they plan to have in the future

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

Yes to local Government reform I believe our councils should be voted in with the STV voting system which is more democratic and encourages more fair representation of our community.

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I would like to see a concept where a binding CIR can be part of local bodies thus giving the community a voice in any council expenditure or proposal they don't agree with, as in Wanganui.

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

In administration I would need to be persuaded with submissions in favour why this is a good idea.

I would be concerned in amalgamation of administration the community

could feel disenfranchised from the council officers they need to turn to for assistance.

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I am not in favour of combining local authorities as it removes the council further from those they represent due to size of local authority.

It would also make it harder for local bodies to be truly representative as the cost of electioneering could become prohibitive.

I see the Southland District has a role with the needs of the rural community where as the ICC has a role for the needs of the urban community,

Different strokes for different folks

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

1) I will work to promote regular Focus meetings in various places within the city to give a progress report on the council programme for the future and how the annual plan is progressing. In the early parts of the year promote focus meetings to present what is proposed in the next annual plan being offered to residents the chance to make submissions for or against the plan.

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2) Organise Focus meetings myself within the Southern community for the purpose to re-look at the report on Southern city concerns which was presented as a late addition of the last council meeting.

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3) Persuade other councillors to support greater accountability and transparency

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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?

YES definitely

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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?

Only where they are large corporations such as the Warehouse.

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I justify this as the size of the business attracts many customers, and with that can and do often create problems such as traffic control, which places extra burden of the city council who is responsible to assure safe public access.

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17. What are your views on council use of fees and charges?  
Council fees are sadly a necessity to ensure costs incurred in administration are sufficient to meet to provide the service  
But I also believe these fees and charges should be kept reasonable to encourage residents to use city facilities such as our swimming pool and refuse tip

I say this as I believe swimming is a healthy and social activity we should encourage especially for families to enjoy this facility.

I also believe if the council has a policy of lower tipping charges this could encourage locals to take their rubbish such as green waste and large non organic items to the city tip and help to curtail the present influx of illegal dumping we are starting to see in the city at present

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

Yes  No

Comment

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I see free water supply as a right to enjoy, I would be very concerned if we went into user pays and know that some city residents could not afford to turn on the tap in their own home

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

!) Assure the council staff was vigilant to keep the CBD area clean and free of rubbish

2) Via Parks and reserves assist with plants in containers to assure the area looked aesthetically nice.

) I would be open to suggestions from the Chamber of Commerce as to what other action they would like to see council perform to enhance the CBD

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

1) Accountability and transparency to the community

2) Assure the community Council meetings will be open and only have public excluded meetings where it is most essential for privacy reasons

3) Work to reduce city debt but at the same time assure the nuts and bolts problems such as the Clifton sewage scheme are dealt with

4) Re look again at the Southern city concerns and take action where necessary.

5) Facilitate community initiatives to encourage community social interaction for the betterment of a happy and peaceful community

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