



## **Marlborough Chamber of Commerce**

### **Submission to Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan 2021-2031**

**May 2021**

#### **Background**

The Marlborough Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit membership organisation supporting businesses throughout the Marlborough region since 1887. The Marlborough Chamber of Commerce is affiliated to the NZ Chamber of Commerce which is in turn part of the International Chamber of Commerce Network. The Marlborough Chamber of Commerce is highly trusted by the business community and provides support and advocacy for that community.

The Chamber has a membership of over 340 members and represents the wider business community of over 7500 business owners, employers and employees. It engages regularly with membership and regularly seeks feedback on local and national issues. Holding a question-and-answer session with Mayor John Leggett and CEO Mark Wheeler from MDC and some of our members just the most recent example of that.

The Chamber is a delivery partner for the Regional Business Partnership, helping to build capability and sustainability of businesses. The Chamber also is a delivery partner with MSD with the Education to Employment broker, looking to bridge the gap between business and youth, focussed on the future of work.

We wish to speak to our submission.

#### **General**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the proposed Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan 2021-2031, we are keenly aware of the importance of the process in terms of shaping the future of the region.

#### **Submission Points**

##### **1. Investing in infrastructure**

- The Council proposes an upgrade to the Redwood Street/Town Branch stormwater system and new weighbridges for waste management.

Do you support the Council's plan to undertake these two investments?

**YES** The Chamber supports the plan for these two investments.

## **2. Investing in the economy**

- The Council proposes the following additional investments in our economy and regional events:
- Continue current economic development activities and increase spending by \$100,000 per annum to foster growth in the technology, food and screen sectors.
- Increase the printing of the Spring and Autumn events guides and distribute nationally at a cost of \$30,000 per annum.
- Commission, at a cost of \$20,000, an economic evaluation of Garden Marlborough to better understand its benefits.
- Allocate \$1.05 million over three years from Reserves to the Marlborough Events Centre for deferred maintenance and fixed operating costs.
- Allocate \$30,000 per annum to assist the operation of the Blenheim Business Association.

Do you support Council increasing its investments in our economy and regional events?

**In Part** The Chamber supports the Council increasing its investments in our economy and regional events but with following additions.

The Chamber believes that there needs to be a clearer communication of the region's future economic development strategy, focus and zoning. The Chamber is of the view that this will help to encourage future investment by existing and new businesses, focussed on sustainability.

The Chamber seeks equal funding of \$30,000 with the Blenheim Business Association, the two bodies serve different functions in the region with the BBA being solely focussed on the development of the CBD and the Chamber being focussed on the much wider business community. The Chamber believes that both of these are crucial to the future economic development of the region and as such would seek the addition of \$30,000 per annum to support the operations of Marlborough Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber firmly believes that the same level of funding that BBA is proposed to receive would greatly enhance the Chambers ability to help deliver more opportunities and value for even more businesses that we currently do.

### **3. Investing in the environment**

The Council proposes significant investments to enhance and protect our environment over the next 10 years to:

- Fulfil obligations under the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 at a cost of \$1.2 million over the next three years, including \$197,000 operating expenditure and \$95,000 capital expenditure for 2021-2022
- Process remaining environmental data to realise the benefits from seabed mapping at an estimated cost of \$1.2 million over the next six years

Do you support Council increasing its investments in protecting our environment?

**YES** The Chamber supports the investments in protecting our environment.

### **4. Investing in our community**

- The Council proposes significant community spending over the next 10 years to:
- Support safety in the community
- Continue our Covid-19 response and enhance community outcomes for our economy
- Renew community facilities on a timely basis
- Enhance community outcomes for connectivity and our standard of living
- Enhance the region as a desirable destination for visitors

Do you support Council's plan to increase investment in our community?

**YES** The Chamber supports the investments in protecting our environment.

### **5. Rates**

- The Council proposes to create a Covid-19 Rates Relief Reserve:
- To continue our Covid-19 response
- To smooth rates increases over the first three years of this Long Term Plan LTP

- To use surplus or unallocated funding from the Infrastructure Upgrade Reserve to fund this Reserve
- To close this Reserve upon achieving a positive balance

Do you support the Council's plan to create this new Reserve and smooth rates increases over the first three years of the 2021-2031 LTP?

**YES** The Chamber supports the Council's plan to create this new Reserve and smooth rates increases over the first three years of the 2021-2015 LTP.

## **6. Housing**

Do you support Council expanding its core role in housing matters?

**YES** The Chamber supports the Council in expanding its core role in housing matters.

Our members strongly support the Council taking a broader approach to helping to improve housing matters. A great many of our members believe that that one of the main challenges facing the region in terms of further development of the economy is that of housing provision.

With significant number of businesses reporting difficulty in recruiting staff due to the lack of available housing and its affordability this is of crucial significance to the region going forward.

From the session with the Mayor and CEO of MDC comments on the importance for the Council to look beyond their primary role of zoning land to looking at a broad range of options to help stimulate the right sort of housing development.

Including but not restricted to inner CBD living, apartment living, smaller homes, units, accommodation for seniors, overall trying to help stimulate the provision of a wider range of housing including more affordable homes. Without this the economic progress of the region will detrimentally affected in our view.

Do you recommend any other Council-funded work on the housing issue?

### **Senior Housing Development on George Street**

Do you support Council investment of this nature in Senior Housing?

**YES** The Chamber supports the investment in Senior Housing.

## **7. Paying for growth - draft Development Contributions Policy**

The Council proposes to adopt the draft Development Contributions Policy, which includes a number of changes to the current approach.

Do you support adoption of the draft Financial Strategy 2021-2031?

**YES** The Chamber supports the adoption of the draft Development Contributions Policy.

## **8. Parking**

Option 1

The Council proposes changes to parking in Blenheim and Picton town centres to:

- Continue one-hour free parking in Picton and Blenheim town centres for on-street and off-street car parks for the foreseeable future
- Fund the forecasted shortfall from free parking with an indicative increase of 50% in parking fees within the Picton and Blenheim CBD areas, with the balance funded by an average rating impact of \$9.33 per rateable property for 2021-2022

Option 2

The alternative option would return town centre parking to the pre-Covid state, removing one-hour free parking. This would result in no increase in parking fees or rates.

This option is not supported by Council as the uncertainty of Covid-19 continues. Council encourages activity in the CBD and supports removing barriers for the community to visit town centres.

Do you support Option 1, for the Council to continue one-hour free parking, with the shortfall funded by an indicative 50% increase in parking fees and an average rating impact of \$9.33 per rateable property for 2021-2022?

**YES** The Chamber supports option 1

## **9. Draft Infrastructure Strategy**

The Council proposes to adopt the draft Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051.

Do you support the proposed Strategy?

**YES** The Chamber supports the adoption of the draft infrastructure strategy 2021-2051

## **10. Draft Financial Strategy**

The Council proposes to adopt the draft Financial Strategy 2021-2031 including:

- Setting a rates cap at the movement of the Local Government Cost Index plus 3%
- Increasing the debt cap from \$140 million to \$230 million of net debt to take account of inflation
- Establishing a Covid-19 Rates Relief Reserve and using funding from that Reserve to reduce general rates; and charges for a period of three years as discussed in the "Rates" section of the document
- Implementing the funding hierarchy outlined in the draft Financial Strategy

Do you support adoption of the draft Financial Strategy 2021-2031?

**YES** The Chamber supports the adoption of the draft financial strategy 2021-2031