



Timaru District Council Long Term Plan Submission May 2021

Thriving Together

Introduction: The South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce (SCCC) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Timaru District Council (TDC) Consultation Document for 2021-2031.

The South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit membership-based service organisation and is the voice of South Canterbury business, serving the community since 1905. With over 525 member businesses in South Canterbury and with a strong national and international Chamber family, we work together to build better business outcomes. We recognise that healthy business cultures lead to the improved wellbeing of all South Cantabrian's.

We provide commentary on the Timaru District Council's Long-Term Plan 2021-2031, based on insights on issues raised by members and wider business community as well as our board's observations and as a result of our longstanding relationship with the Timaru District Council.

We have encouraged Chamber members to make their own submissions and to inform and deepen the engagement on deciding what the future of the Timaru District should look like, in staying silent our community will "get what we are given", while providing feedback ensures the TDC can make better informed decisions.

Feedback has been provided on the areas focussed on by the TDC consultation document with associated overarching commentary and some specific suggestions. We appreciate the time that the TDC has taken to revisit and refresh the vision and values for the district and in providing a face-to-face meeting for SCCC members.

TDC Vision: Together we can thrive.

Vision: Where people, place and business prosper within a healthy, adaptable, and regenerative environment.

Values: Inclusive Leadership, Cultural Caretakers, Transition Navigators

It is good to see that the TDC is now in a position to invest further in the district and has a commendable overarching goal to fund district improvement and award contracts to get the work underway. We note that this spend has been delayed in a number of areas for several years, and the district is in catch up mode. The intention to use local contractors is also commended and a great improvement.

Climate Change

Assessing expenditure in the area of Climate Change is particularly difficult, as this is a new requirement and for many explores previously uncharted waters. In principle we support the collation of data and the development of "in house" expertise. We also encourage the TDC to expand this work with the business community and invite engagement with the SCCC team and members to implement a first stages approach to measuring carbon footprints in businesses, pursuing a whole of district approach.

How much collecting data and advisory services cost and the ability to develop internal expertise or attract specialists is unclear? The Timaru District does not need to be the centre of excellence – we need to be prudent and extrapolate out to work with businesses, sharing resources. It will be imperative that the work undertaken does not replicate that undertaken by Environment Canterbury. It is fair to say that there are wide and varied views on Climate Change and whether the TDC should do the bare minimum or do even more!!

The South Canterbury Chamber supports Option 2.

Aigantighe Art Gallery Redevelopment

Overall the TDC is complemented on a positive approach to building community and the resourcing that this requires. This is long term planning, and we encourage Council to take a seriously long term view looking 50 plus years out. We need to be cognisant that we don't just build on the past but plan for a new and exciting future taking clear steps along the path. What does a vibrant thriving town centre look like and how we achieve this to recognise and protect appropriate elements of the past and our valuable heritage and yet plan for the future.

Hence on a principles perspective consolidation of town centre Council services is preferable – bringing all community services together. This provides value for money for ratepayers, one central resourcing for administration and a connected community offering. The art gallery should be retained in the original house with the sculpture gardens and recognised for its heritage and historical values however all expansion work should be developed at the proposed Theatre Royal and heritage hub including spaces for education, creativity and exhibition and should include a futureproof option for the library.

The South Canterbury Chamber supports Option 4.

It is unclear from the information presented of the patronage of the art gallery and although we hold the 5th most valuable collection, no information has been presented on how this equates to popularity – number of visits etc. and whether these are locals or are we attracting visitors to the district. This data should include some information relating to ROI both from a financial perspective and a community engagement perspective. This hard data enables better decision making based on the value returned to our communities.

Developing Aorangi Park and the Stadium

Noting the increase in need for expanding indoor stadium facilities and an increased need for external upgrade of existing facilities for current sports codes, the Chamber welcomes this investment. There appears to be a clear master plan and the park and stadium have a high volume of both local, regional and national games with strong usage. This is an asset that benefits a large tranche of the community and enhances our attractiveness as a district.

The South Canterbury Chamber supports Option 1.

A vibrant Timaru City Hub

Very few improvements and little investment has been made over the past 20-25 years.

Council's advice that it is open to attracting growth is strongly supported and this must now be actioned by understanding the impact of the development of the showgrounds, this is likely to influence the purpose and style of the CBD and the businesses that choose to locate here. The second highest impact on the CBD is the need to address the earthquake prone building issues that could ultimately lead to the CBD no longer being a safe or desirable place to visit.

The CBD will face EQPB issues with heritage buildings and building facades having 10 – 12 years maximum timeline to be rectified due to being on priority routes. With a backlog of work, tenant flight, and the need to demolish / rebuild affected businesses, this is an issue that needs to take priority.

The South Canterbury Chamber supports Option 3.

Other Matters:

The District Plan Review and Growth Management Strategy will identify the direction for growth and Council is encouraged to be bold and to plan for growth.

Water:

The Chamber believes that the emphasis and opportunity for water development is lacking focus in this plan and that the Jacobs Report only serves to confirm the lack of thorough and robust planning that has taken place in this space. Access to a plentiful, sustainable and potable water supply is in fact one of the most important factors that should be considered for economic growth. We encourage the Timaru District Council to take a holistic approach to this work understanding the need for all industry sectors and residents to have plentiful access. Climate Change has been identified as an area that requires a fundamental shift in thinking and yet very little emphasis has been placed on clear quantifiable evidence and the impact on water supply. The volatility of water usage has not been addressed nor any increased demand.

Industry and industry attraction need power, water, waste and effective transport corridors; plus, the availability of commercial and residential land for development. Council has advised these latter factors will be addressed through the Growth Management Strategy.

Expansion:

The Chamber also seeks options for city expansion perhaps towards Temuka, Pleasant Point and Geraldine- all offer flat land with possible growth opportunities. We do ask whether the plan is too Timaru centric – and encourage Council to consider development and growth into outlying areas.

A Business Improvement District (BID) Policy

We do not support the introduction of a BID policy, without a corresponding reduction in the commercial differential. We do not have confidence that BID funds will have sufficient return on investment for the business community to justify yet another cost for business.

Rates:

We appreciate that Council has additional costs incurred through Covid, our members and the wider business community still face huge costs across increased compliance, minimum wage increases, higher supplier costs, and local government charges.

We are supportive of a number of the Council's proposed projects, we do not think businesses should carry an unfair proportion of the rates bill. A differential of 4.0 is not fairly distributing the costs that cover council operations and amenities that many times offer more value to residents than they do to businesses. We do not support a differential increase to 4.35 for commercial/industrial and accommodation.

Conclusion:

The Chamber thanks the Timaru District Council for the opportunity to provide input into the long term plans and the genuine desire for engagement.

The Chamber also compliments the Timaru District Council on the plan and the principles behind it.

Submission completed by: Wendy Smith on behalf of the South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce. Contact details: wendy@scchamber.org.nz Phone 027 229 2949.