

[E-mail submission Sally Morgan]

To whom it may concern,

I do not wish to speak at a public hearing.

Do you think we should decrease our day-to-day levels of service to reduce the average rate increase? Yes

Do you agree with using \$1.7 million from our forestry reserve to pay for major roading repairs? Yes

Significantly Reduce the budget for Economic Development

As per the Annual Plan “This year we will develop a Destination Management Plan and a post-Covid Events Plan.”

Destination Management Plan

Central Government provided \$47 million to RTO’s (Regional Tourism Organisations) to develop Destination Management Plans, Christchurch NZ (CHCHNZ) is the RTO responsible for the Ashburton District. Council has a three year contract with CHCHNZ to deliver tourism promotion for the Ashburton District. As per the Government guidelines “RTO’s are to work alongside industry, community, iwi, council and others on Destination Management Plans”

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/128164450/tourism-minister-surprised-to-learn-more-than-half-of-regional-tourism-organisations-have-no-management-plan>

As this activity has already been funded by Central Government, Ashburton District Council should not be providing any further financial contribution for this work.

Post-Covid Events Plan

Central Government provided \$50 million to the regions in the Regional Event Fund, Ashburton District received \$232,000 of this fund to be allocated over a 2 - 4 year period. As per the MBIE website, this funding can be used for;

- Event strategy development
- Event feasibility studies and event development

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-recovery/2020-tourism-recovery-package/regional-events-fund/>

As this activity has already been funded by Central Government, Ashburton District Council should not be providing any further financial contribution for this work.

Agricultural Portfolio Advisor

As per the 9 July 2020 Community Services Committee, Economic Development Quarterly Report

“Economic Development is in the process of appointing the Agriculture Portfolio Advisor (APA). The purpose of this position is to work alongside the agricultural industry to identify opportunities, build resilience and future-proof the region’s economy. **The funding for this position has come via the PGF and is for a fixed term of 18 months.**”

This position commenced in August 2020;

<https://www.ashburtondc.govt.nz/news/2020-news/agriculture-portfolio-advisor-begins-new-role-in-mid-and-south-canterbury>

Details of the funding is available in this spreadsheet

<https://www.growregions.govt.nz/assets/funding-announcements/pdu-dashboard-canterbury.pdf>

Again as per the 9 July Economic Development quarterly report, the purpose of the role was to;

- Assess the feasibility of projects, accessing funding if appropriate (including the Provincial GrowthFund processes) while providing additional capacity for economic development across mid and SouthCanterbury.
- Connect with research and development organisations (eg MPI, Lincoln University) that can contribute to the goal of achieving sustainable practices in conjunction with economic growth in MidCanterbury's rural sector. Where necessary, funding applications will be instigated to gain and apply new knowledge and understanding of improved processes and systems for key areas of the local economies. Keeping pace and moving ahead of technological advancements is considered critical to improving the strength and viability of products, systems and services.
- Liaise, assist and help to build the capacity of Māori business, leadership and wellbeing will be a further important aspect in this role. Similarly, there is a need to recognise the cultural values of the other significant cultures in both regions and ensuring a balance of developing enduring partnerships. Creating enduring welcoming communities is vital for the economy of both districts.
- The role in Mid and South Canterbury will include work on improving the knowledge of environmental science. The position will help identify projects that will directly help improve the water, land and air of the natural environment. These projects will need to be inclusive of iwi and urban and rural communities. o These projects will directly relate to changes in farming practices, products produced and manufacturing required to meet any opportunities created by proposed legislative changes.

Therefore this fixed term position should have ceased in February 2021, but this is not the case. Your Economic Development Manager presented to the 6 April 2022 Council meeting the quarterly report for October to December 2021, the manager presented that he was signalling "the intent to make the Agricultural Portfolio Advisor role permanent in the 2023/24 budget round." It appears that council staff are deceiving Councillors with Council already fully funding this role.

General Comments

- Council contracts tourism promotion to Christchurch NZ for approximately \$250,000 p.a.. In return for this Council are presented with a detailed quarterly report along with progress against set KPI's, and a dedicated Mid Canterbury Marketing Manager - ratepayers are getting a significant return on investment
- In Council's Long Term Plan 2021 - 2031 it identifies that in the 2020/2021 year Economic Development had a budget of \$480,000 then into year 1 of the LTP the budget jumped to \$810,000. During the Covid pandemic when Council should be tightening the belt to reduce a significant rate increase to ratepayers, this increase cannot be justified. This budget continues to grow to the end of the LTP period to \$993,000. There is no return on investment to Council or ratepayers for this. Economic Development distributes the Infometrics quarterly report, there is no social media presence. Approximately \$20,000 was given to the Ashburton Guardian

for their shop local campaign when Council had its own “Mid Canterbury Open for Business”

- Grow Mid Canterbury received approximately \$250,000 p.a. from Council, along with applying and receiving external funding for specific projects. In the end Council commissioned a review of Grow Mid Canterbury as they were questioning whether it was getting value for money.

Ashburton Guardian 11 May 2016

<https://www.guardianonline.co.nz/news/end-of-the-line-for-gmc/>

Ashburton Guardian 10 September 2016

<https://www.guardianonline.co.nz/news/latest-news/the-end-for-grow-mid-canterbury/>

- The Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce (CECC) received no funding from Council, yet they have a dedicated Business Growth Advisor - Mid Canterbury. There are over 30 businesses within the Ashburton District who pay an annual membership to CECC. In return they receive;

- Business resources
- Training and event discounts
- Savings with chamber partners
- Personalised mentoring and seminars
- Learning and development pathways

Economic Development is 100% ratepayer funded and there is no return, nothing is provided to local businesses. I work in two local businesses in the CBD, one is small owner operated, there has been no personal visits and no communication in any way from Council's economic development team, where is this owner's return on investment?

- Council needs to reduce the Economic Development budget to \$250,000 (equivalent of tourism) and ensure that KPI's are fully reported back to Council, in addition to the Infometrics reports.

If Council cannot reduce the budget then it should utilise this funding to commission an independent review of that function. To quote from the Ashburton Guardian 5 September 2015 “when you hand an organisation more than quarter of a million dollars you have every right to ask them how that money is being spent says Ashburton District Councillor Stuart Wilson. With no clear indication where council's money was spent, Councillor Russell Ellis said as a custodian of ratepayer money the situation made him uncomfortable.”

<https://www.guardianonline.co.nz/news/questions-still-unanswered>